



The *Aligning Forces For Quality* Hospital Quality Network: **Engaging Local Hospitals in Quality Improvement**

Although health care is a *national* problem, health care is delivered *locally*, and fixing it requires action at every level. Recognizing this, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) introduced *Aligning Forces for Quality* (AF4Q), its signature effort to lift the overall quality of health care in targeted communities, while also reducing racial and ethnic disparities and providing models for national health reform. Teaming up locally with those who get care, give care and pay for care, RWJF aims to deliver lasting change for entire communities. One powerful example of this concept in action is the work of 120 hospitals in the nationwide AF4Q Hospital Quality Network.

Working Locally to Transform the System

To date, more than 37 million individuals live in AF4Q communities – stretching across 14 states and encompassing 271 counties. More than 590 hospitals and 31,000 primary care physicians practice in these communities, and RWJF anticipates that more than half will eventually be a part of the activities. The program intends to drive change in local health care markets that will result in measurable improvements by 2015.

In each community, local Alliances are moving quality forward with activities in four important areas:

- 1. Performance measurement and public reporting:** using common standards to measure the quality of care doctors and hospitals deliver to patients and making that information available to the public.
- 2. Consumer engagement:** encouraging patients to be more active and effective managers of their health care.
- 3. Quality improvement:** implementing techniques and protocols that doctors, nurses and staff in hospitals and ambulatory settings can follow to raise the level of care they deliver to patients.
- 4. Improving the payment and reimbursement system:** developing and pilot testing new models for paying health care providers based on the quality and value of the care they deliver – rather than the number of services they provide.

AF4Q Hospital Quality Network

To improve quality locally, 120 forward-thinking hospitals are participating in AF4Q through the AF4Q Hospital Quality Network. Member hospitals engage health care providers at all levels within a hospital to improve the quality and safety of patient care, identify potential disparities and craft plans to ensure equity. Participating hospitals are a part of an organic learning network of institutions that develop and exchange quality improvement (QI) tools, strategies and lessons learned. They aim to develop and encourage the spread of effective and replicable QI strategies, models and resources within the hospital, across Aligning Forces communities and across the country.

The breadth of the network gives it strength and diversity. The AF4Q Hospital Quality Network includes small, 25-bed critical access hospitals in places like Maine, Wisconsin and Humboldt County as well as large 500+ bed urban teaching hospitals in Memphis, Boston, Albuquerque and Oregon.

The AF4Q Hospital Quality Network is addressing three separate QI initiatives: Reducing Readmissions, Increasing Throughput and Improving Language Services.

AF4Q Hospital Quality Network

120 hospitals

Aligning Forces for Quality | Improving Health & Health Care in Communities Across America

An initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Wisconsin

- Columbia St. Mary's - Milwaukee
- Columbia St. Mary's - Ozaukee
- Fort HealthCare
- Holy Family Memorial Medical Center
- Howard Young Medical Center
- Hudson Hospital & Clinics
- Langlade Hospital
- Memorial Hospital of Lafayette County
- Memorial Medical Center
- Mercy Medical Center
- Ministry Eagle River Memorial Hospital
- Ministry Sacred Heart Hospital
- Ministry Saint Mary's
- Ministry Saint Michael's Hospital
- Monroe Clinic

- Our Lady of Victory Hospital
- Reedsburg Area Medical Center
- Sacred Heart Hospital
- Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital & Clinics
- St. Agnes Hospital
- St. Elizabeth Hospital - Appleton
- St. Joseph's Hospital - Chippewa Falls
- St. Joseph's Hospital - West Bend
- St. Mary's Hospital - Madison
- St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center - Green Bay
- St. Nicholas Hospital
- St. Vincent Hospital - Green Bay

West Michigan

- Allegan General Hospital
- Carson City Hospital
- Mercy Health Partners
- North Ottawa Community Hospital
- Saint Mary's Health Care

Central Indiana

- Clarian Health North, LLC
- Clarian West Medical Center
- Methodist Hospital - Indianapolis
- St. Francis Hospital - Beech Grove
- St. Francis Hospital - Indianapolis
- St. Vincent Hospital - Indianapolis
- The Indiana Heart Hospital
- Wishard Health Services

Detroit, Mich.

- Mount Clemens Regional Medical Center
- St. Joseph Mercy Oakland
- Sinai-Grace Hospital

Western New York

- Buffalo General Hospital
- DeGraff Memorial Hospital
- Erie County Medical Center Corporation
- Millard Fillmore Gates
- Millard Fillmore Suburban
- Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center
- Roswell Park Cancer Institute

Minnesota

- Avera Marshall Regional Medical Center
- Range Regional Health Services

Puget Sound, Wash.

- Allenmore Hospital
- Good Samaritan Hospital
- Overlake Hospital
- Providence St. Peter Hospital
- Tacoma General Hospital
- Valley General Hospital

Humboldt County, Calif.

- Jerold Phelps Community Hospital
- Mad River Community Hospital
- St. Joseph Hospital - Eureka

Oregon

- Ashland Community Hospital
- Bay Area Hospital
- Lake District Hospital
- Mid-Columbia Medical Center
- Oregon Health & Science University
- Pioneer Memorial Hospital
- Rogue Valley Medical Center
- Samaritan Albany General Hospital
- St. Charles Bend Medical Center
- St. Charles Redmond Medical Center
- Silverton Hospital
- Sky Lakes Medical Center
- Tuality Community Hospital
- Willamette Valley Medical Center

Albuquerque, N.M.

- Lovelace Westside Hospital
- Lovelace Women's Hospital
- Presbyterian Healthcare Services
- UNM Hospitals

Kansas City, Mo.

- Providence Medical Center
- Saint Luke's Hospital
- St. Joseph Medical Center - Kansas City
- St. Mary's Medical Center - Blue Springs
- The Children's Mercy Hospitals and Clinics
- Truman Medical Center Hospital Hill
- Truman Medical Center Lakewood

Memphis, Tenn.

- Methodist North Hospital
- Methodist South Hospital
- Regional Medical Center at Memphis

Maine

- Central Maine Medical Center
- Eastern Maine Medical Center
- HD Goodall Hospital
- Maine Medical Center
- Mercy Hospital - Portland
- Mid Coast Hospital
- Penobscot Bay Medical Center
- Penobscot Valley Hospital
- Redington-Fairview General Hospital
- Rumford Hospital

Boston, Mass.

- Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
- Newton-Wellesley Hospital
- St. Elizabeth's Medical Center
- Tufts Medical Center

South Central Pennsylvania

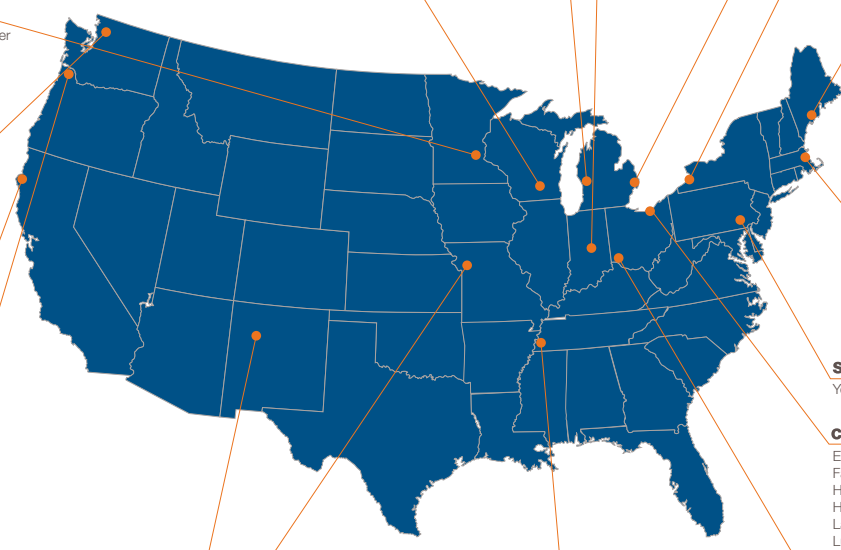
- York Hospital

Cleveland, Ohio

- Euclid Hospital
- Fairview Hospital
- Hillcrest Hospital
- Huron Road Hospital
- Lakewood Hospital
- Lutheran Hospital
- Marymount Hospital
- Medina Hospital
- South Pointe Hospital
- St. Vincent Charity Medical Center
- The MetroHealth System

Cincinnati, Ohio

- Dearborn County Hospital
- McCullough Hyde Memorial Hospital Inc.
- St. Elizabeth Healthcare - Edgewood
- St. Elizabeth Healthcare - Florence
- University Hospital



AF4Q Hospital Quality Network: Reducing Readmissions

Readmission of patients recently discharged after hospitalization represents an expensive and all-too-common lapse in the quality of care delivered in the U.S. health care system. National data reveal that nearly 24.5 percent of Medicare patients admitted for chronic diseases such as heart failure will return to the hospital within 30 days and that the government is estimated to be paying an extra \$12 billion to \$17 billion a year for this care. In addition, patients of differing races, ethnicities and language preferences often experience different rates of readmission. This disparity can be an issue of quality or culturally inappropriate care that most hospitals can address.

Today there are 91 hospitals in 16 communities participating in *Reducing Readmissions* and working to:

1. Reduce 30-day readmission rates following heart failure hospitalization by 20 percent from baseline by March 2012;
2. Achieve and maintain 95 percent on the heart failure Measure of Ideal Care (a measure determining whether heart failure patients received all recommended therapies);
3. Standardize the collection of race, ethnicity and language data during registration using the U.S. Office of Management and Budget categories; and
4. Identify potential disparities in the quality of care and develop plans to ensure equity as a core component of quality.

AF4Q Hospital Quality Network: Increasing Throughput

Hospital emergency departments (EDs) provide a critical safety net in every community, yet over the last decade, studies have deemed the country's EDs to be at a breaking point, weighed down by crowding as patient volumes have steadily increased, while capacity has decreased. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, from 1996 to 2006 the number of ED visits rose 32 percent, while the number of hospital EDs across the country dropped almost 5 percent – leaving an increasing number of patients concentrated in a smaller number of EDs. Because of an increase in ED patients – and efficiency issues in the ED and elsewhere in the hospital – patient care suffers and value is not maximized. It's a problem that vexes nearly every hospital administrator in the nation.

There are currently 46 hospitals in 16 communities participating in *Increasing Throughput*. They are working to improve select ED performance measures by 15 percent from baseline by March 2012. These measures include:

1. ED arrival to departure – admitted patients;
2. ED arrival to departure – discharged patients;
3. Admit decision time to ED departure time; and
4. Left before being seen.

AF4Q Hospital Quality Network: Improving Language Services

All hospitals are required to provide interpreter services to patients who speak limited English, but there is little guidance to hospitals on the most effective, efficient ways to implement these requirements. Hospitals are attempting to meet the requirements in a variety of ways – but are doing so without federal guidance, uniform standards or agreed-upon systems for assessing the quality of their language services. As patient populations become increasingly diverse, hospital leaders are eager to learn from each other about how to cost-effectively provide high-quality interpreter services to patients with limited English proficiency (LEP), assess their own programs and improve the services they provide.

Currently there are 37 hospitals in 13 communities participating in the AF4Q Hospital Quality Network *Improving Language Services* focus area. They are working to improve care for patients who speak or understand limited English, in part by better screening patients for preferred spoken and written language and efficiently meeting the language needs of their patients.

This includes ensuring that all their LEP patients receive both initial assessment and discharge instructions – critical communication junctures for ensuring quality outcomes – with the assistance of qualified language services providers. Performance measures being assessed include:

1. Number of patients receiving language services supported by qualified language services providers;
2. Screening for preferred spoken language for health care; and
3. Screening for preferred written language for health care.

For more information about the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's *Aligning Forces for Quality* program visit www.rwjf.org/qualityequality

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For nearly 40 years, RWJF has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.