

Working with Consumers to Tackle Low Back Pain



The Oregon Health Care Quality Corporation (Quality Corp) had already worked with the Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Health Leadership Council, and the Center for Evidence-Based Policy at Oregon Health and Science University to develop an Oregon-specific, evidence-based guideline to help practitioners evaluate and manage low back pain. But this Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q) Alliance realized that consumers also needed some tools to help them understand low back pain and reset their expectations about safe and effective care.

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Lessons Learned

- It's important to get consumer feedback on any materials developed for consumers—the results can be surprising.
- It's critical to a program such as this to have a multi-stakeholder steering committee overseeing the development of materials. Not only can the steering committee provide content expertise, but it also can help you anticipate potential concerns from community members and provide distribution channels.

So Quality Corp worked with a multiple-stakeholder steering committee to develop consumer-friendly tools for Oregonians. The committee translated the practitioners' guideline and its key messages into a consumer booklet and an online, interactive quiz to help people learn how to take simple steps to relieve their low back pain and avoid unnecessary treatment.

“The booklet and quiz help consumers better understand their treatment options, when to see a doctor, and the potential harms of unnecessary care,” said Katrina Kahl, director of communications for Quality Corp. “We tested the materials with consumers, and early feedback has been positive.”

In fact, within a week of mailing the booklets to providers, Quality Corp received numerous requests for more copies. And its public reporting website, www.PartnerforQualityCare.org, received a nearly 15-fold increase in unique visitors to the site compared to the same period the previous year.

Kahl attributes the project's success to the fact that it was a collaborative, community process. “We worked carefully with our low back pain steering committee to create an evidence-based resource, while also anticipating potential concerns of consumers in our community. The main messages behind the campaign, simple steps to take on your own before seeking care and receiving unnecessary tests and procedures, speaks to all of our work through the lens of a common condition that will affect nearly everyone at some point in their lives.”

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