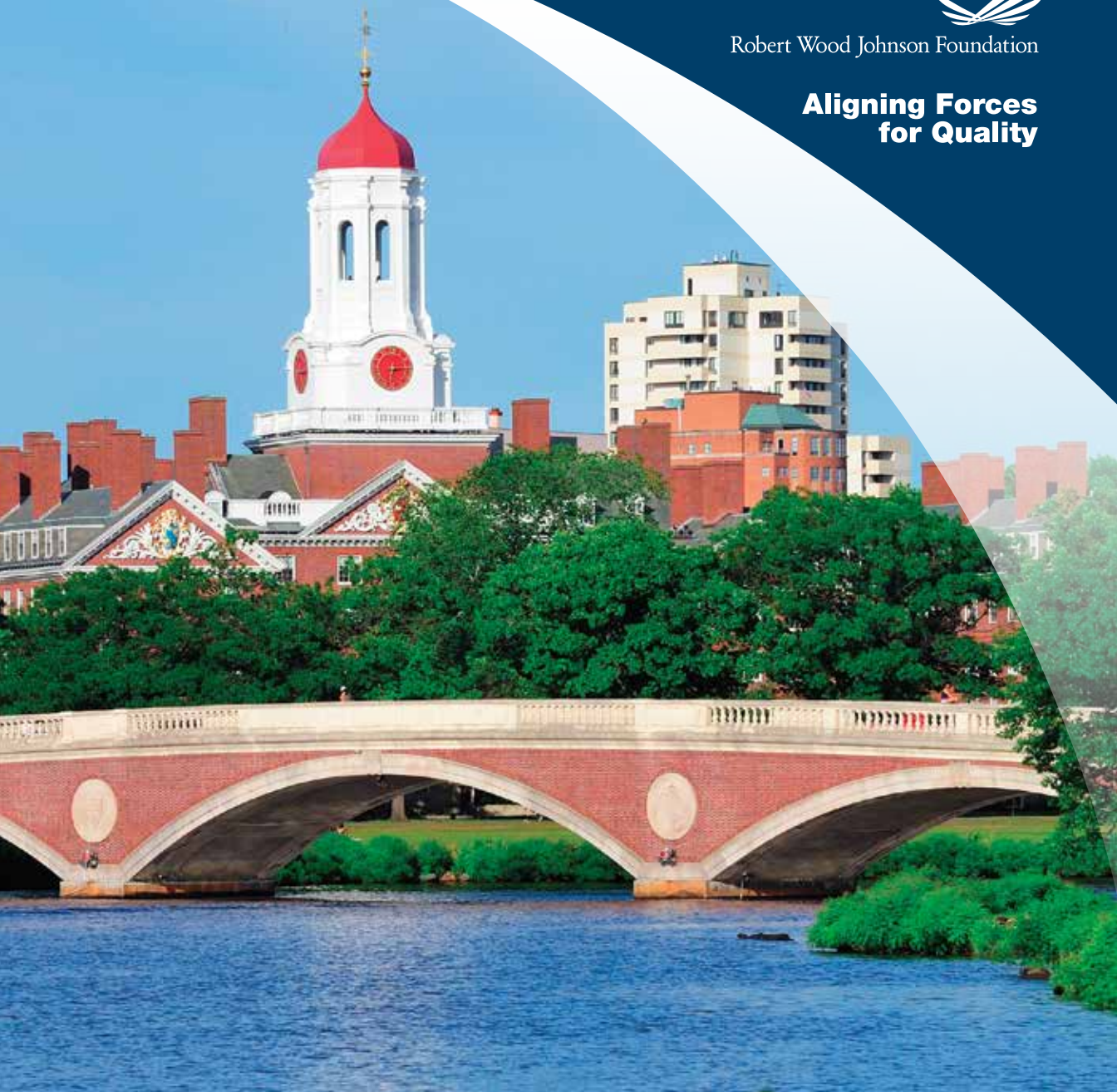




Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

**Aligning Forces
for Quality**



Greater Boston

A COMMUNITY EMBRACING THE
CONSUMER VOICE TO IMPROVE CARE

Massachusetts Health Quality Partners (MHQP) is a broad-based coalition of physicians, hospitals, health plans, purchasers, patient and public representatives, academics, and government agencies working together to promote improvement in the quality of health care services in Massachusetts. MHQP was first established in 1995 by a group of Massachusetts health care leaders who identified the importance of valid, comparable measures to drive improvement.

MHQP's mission is to drive measurable improvements in health care quality, patients' experiences of care, and use of resources in Massachusetts through patient and public engagement and broad-based collaboration among health care stakeholders.



A Community Embracing the Consumer Voice to Improve Care

Organizations that have patients and consumers at the table lend a valuable perspective to decision makers about the way care is provided in their communities. Hearing and learning directly from individual consumers—and including them as a part of the decision-making process—can provide a unique, personal, and highly valuable contribution to ensuring high-quality, affordable care.

Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q) Greater Boston, led by Massachusetts Health Quality Partners (MHQP), recognizes the importance of engaging patient, family, and community stakeholders. As a cornerstone of the AF4Q partnership, MHQP and the Greater Boston AF4Q Alliance are working toward a more patient-centered health care system, with the help of individual consumers. A critical component of their statewide consumer engagement strategy has been the development of the Patient and Public Engagement Council (PPEC). The council is fully integrated with MHQP's leadership structure and helps strengthen the perspective of patients, family members, and the public. Two PPEC members also serve on MHQP's Board of Directors, and several other PPEC representatives serve on the Greater Boston AF4Q Leadership Team and working groups.

... patient perspectives must be at the center of decision-making...

“The council offers a place where I can contribute my experience as a patient and career coach for people with chronic health conditions toward creating a more patient-centric system of care,” said Rosalind Joffe, a patient and co-chair of the PPEC. “With MHQP, I know that my time and perspective are valued and put to action.”

The PPEC members draw on their own experience as patients and family members to help MHQP address a wide range of health care issues statewide. This includes establishing priorities and performance measures for quality, public reporting, and translating members' own health care experiences to help others.



“The PPEC adds the important dimension of consumer leadership to MHQP's already established physician, health plan, and executive governance councils that guide our strategic decisions,” said Barbra Rabson, executive director of MHQP and co-chair of the Greater Boston AF4Q Leadership Team. “With the PPEC, patient and public engagement has become a more central focus for accomplishing MHQP's mission to drive measurable improvements in health care quality, patients' experiences of care, and use of resources in Massachusetts.”

With a broad range of unique consumer perspectives, PPEC members were a key part

of the recent partnership between MHQP and *Consumer Reports* to develop the publication's first-ever rating of patient experiences with their primary care physicians. MHQP provided data that allowed consumers to examine the patient experience with nearly 500 doctors' offices in Massachusetts. PPEC members were able to help providers understand the value of displaying results in a way that would be easy for consumers to understand and use.

PPEC member Christine Duvivier worked on the project and said the team had a big impact. "In our work with the *Consumer Reports* team, we shifted the perspective to recognize individuals as wise and choosing to take charge of their own health, partnering with providers to help them do so," said Duvivier.

"The whole dynamic of the [*Consumer Reports*] project shifted when PPEC members came to the table," said Rabson. Their insights created an important balance in the discussion between health care provider and consumer perspectives. The result was a final product that made important information much more accessible to consumers.

The contributions of PPEC members are highly valued and respected in the community. MHQP is now integrating the PPEC and the patient perspective into other areas of its quality improvement efforts. For example, Tufts Health Care Institute has now included consumers and their perspectives in its intensive course for

senior and chief medical residents that focuses on providing high-quality care in a cost-conscious environment.

"If we are to be successful in making health care delivery truly patient- and family-centric, patient perspectives must be at the center of decision-making," said Rosalie Phillips, executive director of the Tufts Health Care Institute. "A council of consumers, when truly integrated into the strategy, policy, and operations of a delivery system, adds a critical dimension to advance meaningful improvements in the quality of care that clinicians provide and the experience of that care for patients."

Later this year, MHQP, with the help of the PPEC, will launch a new consumer-oriented website. It will help patients and families make important decisions based on health care quality data. The website also will provide resources to help patients more effectively interact with their caregivers and become more active participants in their own well-being.

"I have enjoyed working with the PPEC and MHQP. Each of us represents different views and constituencies, and I bring a perspective that notes the growing consumer interest in well-being (as opposed to simply sick care), the rapid growth of consumers choosing preventive and alternative approaches to their well-being, and the growing body of research on the role of positive emotion in avoiding, reducing symptoms of, and curing disease," said Duvivier.

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