



Optimizing Health by Advancing the Quality of Medication Use

PRESS RELEASE

New Medication Access Framework Identifies Opportunities for Quality Measurement to Address Social Determinants of Health

Framework Holistically Defines Medication Access and Identifies Common Barriers Patients Face

Alexandria, Va. (March 14, 2019) – The Pharmacy Quality Alliance (PQA) has developed a [“Medication Access Framework for Quality Measurement”](#) to address the social determinants of health that hinder patient medication access and contribute to poor health outcomes. The framework identifies seven key areas patients encounter while accessing medications and the structural, financial and personal barriers patients face within each. New quality performance measures can be developed based on the framework to evaluate and incentivize appropriate medication access.

“Access to medications is an important part of high-quality, value-based healthcare,” said Matthew Pickering, PharmD, PQA’s Senior Director of Research and Quality Strategies.

“Improving access, which affects adherence and patient outcomes, requires a focus on the social determinants of health. The framework we have developed holistically defines medication access and identifies gaps in quality measurement that could address the financial and non-financial factors that stand between patients and the medications they need.”

The framework describes the cyclical nature of medication access. It begins with a patient’s awareness of an illness or condition and ends with medication adherence. Common barriers patients encounter are noted within each point in the process of accessing medications. Patient health literacy was the most common barrier identified. Other barriers include medication-related costs and insurance.

“Access to medications continues to be a problem for many Americans,” Laura Cranston, RPh, PQA Chief Executive Officer, said. “This important framework provides researchers and measure developers with clear targets for measure development and quality improvement initiatives. Given the complexity of medication access, the framework also points toward a medication access core measure set to comprehensively address the barriers patients face. We look forward to supporting the healthcare community in leveraging the framework to develop meaningful, effective measures that benefit patients.”

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The framework is the centerpiece of a PQA report, "[Access to Care: Development of a Medication Access Framework for Quality Measurement](#)," released today. The report is the product of PQA's Access to Care Roundtable, a multi-stakeholder panel of experts in social determinants of health, healthcare quality improvement and quality performance measurement. The roundtable and report were possible through support from the National Pharmaceutical Council (NPC).

"Barriers to medication access and compliance have long been acknowledged as a serious problem for the US health care system, costing billions of dollars in lost productivity, additional doctor visits, preventable hospitalizations and nursing home admissions, and even premature death. This framework provides us with actionable steps to break down those barriers to patient care," said Kimberly Westrich, MA, NPC Vice President of Health Services Research.

PQA is hosting a [free webinar](#) March 14 from 1:00-2:00 p.m. ET to present the framework and answer questions about how it can be used to improve patient access to medications.

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Resources

- [View this press release on the PQA website](#)
- [Download this press release](#) (PDF)
- [Download a medication access framework graphic](#) (JPG)
- [Download the report](#) (PDF)
- [Download the report's Appendix C](#) (Excel)

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