

Executive Brief

The challenge of defining priorities when it comes to quality care

For many years, the healthcare industry's relationship with quality has been, in a word, complicated. On October 30, 2017, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced its intentions to simplify things through "Meaningful Measures." With this program in place, providers are expected to assess core issues that are most vital to improving patient outcomes. In addition, CMS announced it is implementing the Medicare Access and Chip Reauthorization Act (MACRA) in a way that minimizes the burden and costs that providers face in meeting the legislation's requirements.

There are still multiple ways of looking at quality of care, making it difficult to effectively measure how well health systems are doing and which types of “quality” should take priority.

What is physician burnout?

“We need to move from fee-for-service to a system that pays for value and quality — but how we define value and quality today is a problem,” said CMS Administrator Seema Verma. “We all know it: Clinicians and hospitals have to report an array of measures to different payers. There are many steps involved in submitting them, taking time away from patients. Moreover, it’s not clear whether all of these measures are actually improving patient care.”¹

Given that healthcare executives who participated in the 2017 HIMSS Leadership Survey identified quality-related measures as two of their top three concerns,² the government’s efforts to simplify such measures are certainly welcome. However, while the government might be paving the way, providers still face many hurdles as they strive to improve the quality and reporting of care delivery. These efforts are more important than ever though, as they now have a direct impact on financial reimbursement as well as the overall patient care experience.

One of the main issues: There are still multiple ways of looking at quality of care, making it difficult to effectively measure how well health systems are doing and which types of “quality” should take priority.

The best patient care experiences

Quality, from a patient perspective, is becoming a hot-button issue in radiology. Patients expect not only the best clinical care, but the best customer service as well. As healthcare becomes more consumer driven, patients no longer accept the status quo, but instead want to experience the best care and service from radiologists. As a result, radiology has become a very competitive market where patients are increasingly making their own decisions based on factors such as convenience, price, and perceived quality.

What’s more, patients want to communicate seamlessly with radiology providers in the same way they interact with their retail establishments and banks — through computers and smart devices. They want to connect to their health information at a time and a place that is convenient for them.

The importance of efficient workflow

For radiologists to meet quality standards, they must also have sensible and streamlined processes in place. As the volume of images continues to grow, healthcare providers need to not only ensure that images are read, but that the radiologist with the most relevant expertise is assigned to each study.

In addition, workflow needs to be optimized, as radiologists who work quickly and effectively are more likely to provide consumers with the efficient care that they are seeking.

However, the plethora of imaging systems in play introduces workflow complications. When chest x-rays are read on one system while mammograms are handled on another, for example, the disconnect makes it difficult for radiologists to streamline their work, which causes delays and frustration — and ultimately less than optimal quality.

Given these concerns, organizational leaders are searching for imaging solutions that enable them to deliver the best care by emulating the same type of experiences patients receive outside the realm of healthcare.

To learn how Watson Health Imaging solutions can help improve the delivery of quality care, visit ibm.com/watson-health/solutions/radiology-solutions.

About Watson Health Imaging

Watson Health Imaging, a segment of IBM Watson Health, is a leading provider of innovative artificial intelligence, enterprise imaging and interoperability solutions that seek to advance healthcare. Its Merge branded enterprise imaging solutions facilitate the management, sharing and storage of billions of patient medical images.

With solutions that have been used by providers for more than 25 years, Watson Health Imaging is helping to reduce costs, improve efficiencies and enhance the quality of healthcare worldwide.

Footnotes

1. [CMS Administrator Verma Announces New Meaningful Measures Initiative and Addresses Regulatory Reform; Promotes Innovation at LAN Summit. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. October 2017.](#)
2. [2017 HIMSS Leadership and Workforce Survey.](#)

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