

CMS NEWS

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CMS EXPANDS HEALTHCARE PROVIDER DIRECTORY LAUNCHES FIRST PHASE OF PHYSICIAN COMPARE WEB SITE

More Information For Consumers Including Data About Quality of Care

Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) enhanced the Physician Directory tool at www.medicare.gov with new information about physicians and other healthcare workers in their communities and the services those professionals provide.

The new feature, called *Physician Compare*, expands and updates CMS' Healthcare Provider Directory, which has helped millions of beneficiaries find Medicare-participating doctors online for over a decade. The new tool expands the doctor-specific information into the suite of informational tools for Medicare beneficiaries and other consumers.

“The new *Physician Compare* tool begins to fill an important gap in our online tools by providing more information about physicians and other healthcare workers,” said Donald Berwick, M.D., CMS administrator. “This helps to pave the way for consumers to have similar information about their physicians as they have for nursing homes, home health agencies and health and drug plans.”

The new site, at www.medicare.gov/find-a-doctor, which was required by the Affordable Care Act of 2010, contains information about physicians enrolled in the Medicare program, which include Doctors of Medicine, Osteopathy, Optometry, Podiatric Medicine, and Chiropractic. The site also contains information about other types of health professionals who routinely care for Medicare beneficiaries, including nurse practitioners, clinical psychologists, registered dietitians, physical therapists, physician assistants, and occupational therapists.

The *Physician Compare* Web Site is designed to be consumer friendly and help all patients—whether on Medicare or not—locate health professionals in their communities. The information on the site includes contact and address information for offices, the professional's medical specialty, where the professional completed his or her degree as well as residency or other clinical training, whether the professional speaks a foreign language, and the professional's gender. The tool can also help Medicare beneficiaries identify which physicians participate in the Medicare program.

In addition to information about the physician's practice, *Physician Compare* also shows consumers whether the practice reported certain data to CMS through the Physician Quality Reporting System, formerly known as the Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI). Currently, the PQRI reporting system is a voluntary reporting program that rewards physicians and other eligible healthcare professionals for reporting data on quality measures related to services furnished to Medicare beneficiaries. These quality measures are based on the best available medical evidence and designed to help professionals improve care for patients. In 2009, over 200,000 professionals reported data to CMS through the Physician Quality Reporting System.

Later in 2011, CMS plans a second phase of the Web site which will indicate whether professionals chose to participate in a voluntary effort with the Agency to encourage doctors to prescribe medicines electronically, rather than through traditional paper-based prescription methods.

In future years, the *Physician Compare* Web site will be expanded with information about the quality of care Medicare beneficiaries receive from physicians and the other healthcare professionals profiled on the site. The

expansion will include information on quality of care and patient experience that can help consumers learn more about the care provided by Medicare-participating physicians. CMS is required by the Affordable Care Act to develop a plan to implement this expansion by 2013.

“Today’s release of *Physician Compare* moves us closer towards CMS’ goal to improve the quality of healthcare for people with Medicare in all the places where they receive care, including the doctor’s office,” said Berwick. “By using a considered, step-wise approach to spotlighting quality of care, we can create a tool that will help doctors and patients for decades to come.”

CMS has been working closely with healthcare stakeholders as it develops its future plans for the *Physician Compare* Web site, and will continue to do so through public meetings and forums, as well as through the regular processes to update the Physician Fee Schedule.

To learn more about the quality information CMS already collects through Medicare’s Physician Quality Reporting System, visit <http://www.cms.gov/pqri>. To visit the *Physician Compare* Web site, visit www.medicare.gov/find-a-doctor or click on the Compare tab at www.healthcare.gov.