



September 18, 2024

### News from the CQO's Desk



#### **WHA Releases 2024 Health Care Quality Report**

WHA released its [2024 Health Care Quality Report](#), titled "Data-Driven Excellence: Enhancing Health Outcomes through Quality Measures." This comprehensive report emphasizes the crucial role of data and quality metrics in revolutionizing health care delivery and outcomes throughout Wisconsin.

Our hospitals and health systems are dedicated to leveraging data and innovative quality initiatives to drive significant improvements in patient care and community health," said WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding. "This report showcases the commitment to excellence that defines Wisconsin's health care landscape and our ongoing efforts to create a healthier future for all."

Be sure to check out the [infographic](#) and [full report!](#)

#### **Hospitals Surpass Pre-Pandemic Levels in Key Patient Safety Measures**

*American Hospital Association Launched Patient Safety Initiative*

A [new report](#) released by the American Hospital Association (AHA), in collaboration with Vizient, reveals that hospitals across the country have made remarkable strides in improving patient safety and care quality, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. The report highlights how hospitals, despite facing a sicker and more complex patient population in the first quarter of 2024, have demonstrated significant improvements in outcomes and safety measures compared to the last quarter of 2019.

In alignment with this national trend, WHA's own [2024 Quality Report](#) also highlights how hospitals in Wisconsin have not only returned to but surpassed pre-pandemic levels in key quality measures. WHA's report showcases the collective efforts of Wisconsin hospitals in driving down infection rates, enhancing patient safety protocols and improving outcomes across the board, reinforcing our commitment to exceptional patient care.

#### **What is the AHA Patient Safety Initiative?**

Hospitals and health systems have expressed a commitment to enhancing patient safety. In response, the AHA launched a national initiative to support these efforts, building on existing safety infrastructure, expertise and partnerships. With over 1,500 participants and growing, this initiative leverages AHA's coordination to facilitate progress. AHA will provide tools, resources and educational collaboratives around the priority areas. Hospitals can access webinars and other resources to share knowledge and practices. Hospitals will also have opportunities to share work and report progress on key measures.

This project aims to support hospitals in enhancing patient safety by:

- Providing tools and data
- Offering a platform for sharing improvement stories
- Scaling successful local innovations nationally
- Informing public policy to support safety improvements

To learn more and register, click [here](#).

## WHA Continues to Express Concerns with Inadequate Medicare Payments in Outpatient Comment Letter

On Sept. 9, WHA urged the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to account for the true costs of inflation in health care which have been underestimated by CMS in recent annual payment updates, including CMS's proposed 2025 outpatient increase of 2.6%.

WHA pointed to a [report from the American Hospital Association](#) that showed:

- Overall inflation grew by 12.4% from 2021 through 2023 — more than twice as fast as Medicare reimbursement for hospital care, which increased by 5.2% on the inpatient side during the same time.
- Labor costs increased by more than \$42.5 billion from 2021 through 2023 to a total of \$839 billion.
- Hospitals have had little choice but to turn to contract labor to fill shifts, spending approximately \$51.1 billion on contracted staff in 2023 alone.

At the same time, more people have been moving off commercial insurance and onto Medicare as our population ages, significantly altering hospitals' payor mix. From 2016 to 2022, the average payor mix for a Wisconsin hospital has seen Medicare grow from 45% to 50%, while commercially insured patients have shrunk from 37% of the payor mix to only 32%. The combined impact has seen annual Medicare underpayments to Wisconsin hospitals grow from -\$1.77 billion in 2016 to -\$3.3 billion in 2022, an 86% increase in six years. WHA noted these factors have had a measurable impact on hospitals' bottom lines, including contributing significantly to two hospital closures.

WHA also pushed back on CMS's plans to implement new conditions of participation (COPs) related to obstetrics and maternal health, suggesting CMS should be seeking a carrot rather than a stick approach. CMS had stated its goal is to ensure these policy changes address preventable disparities in care but do not exacerbate access to care issues, but WHA recommended CMS abandon new regulations on hospitals that are already overregulated. "WHA is concerned that adding COPs may duplicate, or worse, conflict with requirements already in place, and that this may be the breaking point for hospitals that are already having difficult conversations surrounding whether they can sustain birthing services," said WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding.

Despite these concerns, WHA provided comments in support of CMS extending telehealth flexibilities and reducing prior authorization wait times for Medicare services administered at hospital outpatient departments. WHA noted that workforce shortages continue to be one of the most significant challenges hospitals and health systems face and hospitals need the flexibility that telehealth provides as well as more streamlined prior authorization policies to reduce unnecessary administrative burdens on clinicians so they can focus on patient care.

In addition to these comments, WHA provided comments on:

- Proposed payment changes for diagnostic radiopharmaceuticals
- Proposed non-opioid treatments for pain
- Further CMS flexibilities on its 4-walls policy for Medicaid services
- Numerous new proposals on quality measures, including a new request for information (RFI) on changes to hospitals star ratings.

You can read WHA's full [comment letter here](#).

Contact WHA's VP Federal and State Relations [Jon Hoelter](#) with questions.

## World Patient Safety Day September 17

**Emphasize** the pivotal role of correct, timely and safe diagnosis in improving patient safety

**Give** prominence to diagnostic safety in patient safety policy and clinical practice at all levels of health care,

**Foster** collaboration among policy-makers, health care leaders, health workers, patient organizations, and other stakeholders in advancing correct, timely and safe diagnosis.



**Empower** patients and families to actively engage with health workers and health care leaders to improve diagnostic processes.

We thank Wisconsin hospitals for all you do on World Patient Safety Day and everyday.

## **Evers Administration Recognizes World Suicide Prevention Day, Highlights Grants to Help Reduce Suicide Deaths**

Recognizing World Suicide Prevention Day, Gov. Evers and his administration are raising awareness and highlighting their efforts to expand mental health services and save lives. Gov. Evers proclaimed September 8 - 14, 2024, Suicide Prevention Week, and the month of September as Suicide Prevention Month. For Gov. Evers' full statement and additional information on these efforts, click [here](#). A copy of the governor's Suicide Prevention Week and Suicide Prevention Month proclamation is available [here](#).

## **Wisconsin Health Care Organizations Invited to Apply for No-cost COVID Surplus Items from DHS**

Wisconsin agencies, including health care organizations, are invited to apply for no-cost COVID surplus items from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). Available items include respirators, masks, KN95s, gloves and more. If interested, complete this [state survey](#) to request no-cost surplus supplies. The survey closes September 30 at 4 p.m. and all supplies will be shipped at no cost.

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To review the most up-to-date quality and patient safety data for Wisconsin hospitals, visit [CheckPoint](#).

### Educational Events & Resources

**New!**

#### **An Evidenced-Based Approach for Improving Patient Safety and Enhancing High Reliability – Structured Handoff Communication**

**When:** October 22, 2024 – 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Register [here](#).

Join us for the upcoming quality webinar featuring the I-PASS Patient Safety Institute. Enhance your hospital's patient safety culture by participating in this informative session on applying a systems-based approach to communication in healthcare. The I-PASS Patient Safety Institute offers evidence-based solutions and strategies to improve handoff communication across healthcare teams, ensuring better care coordination and reduced medical errors. Don't miss this opportunity to learn from the industry leaders and implement proven methods to elevate your facility's quality of care. Register now to secure your spot and take a step towards safer, more effective transitions of care.

**Save the Date!**

#### **Dementia Friendly Care Webinar**

**When:** November 11, 2024 – 12 - 1 p.m.

Watch this space for details and registration.

## **Wisconsin Association for Perinatal Care (WAPC) Perinatal Substance Use Webinar series**

Join WAPC for this educational opportunity designed to meet the needs of a broad range of perinatal stakeholders who work with people affected by perinatal substance use. Sessions are held every other month January through November. There is no cost to attend the webinars.

**Upcoming Session:** Mental Health, Trauma and Substance Use

**When:** November 25, 2024 – 12 - 1 p.m.

For more information about the series and additional sessions, click [here](#).



Top: Kelli Engen, Superior Health quality improvement advisor. Bottom: Stacy Kopp, WHA clinical quality improvement manager and Superior Health quality improvement advisor.

## Superior Health Quality Alliance Participates in Health Fair

On Tuesday, September 17, 2024, Superior Health Quality Alliance (Superior Health) quality improvement advisors, including Stacy Kopp from WHA, participated in the Portage County Health Fair in Stevens Point, WI. Hosted by the Portage County Aging and Disability Resource Center, the event provided health and fall prevention strategies to older adults and individuals with disabilities. The Superior Health advisors offered blood pressure screenings, mobility exercise demonstrations, diabetic foot examination education and dietary tips. This initiative highlights Superior Health's commitment to community health and wellness. WHA is one of the eight-member organizations that make up Superior Health.

## Grant Opportunities

### Wisconsin Coverdell Opportunity for Hospitals

WHA is excited to announce a grant funding opportunity (GFO) through the Wisconsin Coverdell Stroke Program. This funding aims to support the implementation and expansion of comprehensive stroke systems for individuals at high risk of stroke and to enhance the quality of care for stroke patients across the continuum.

This opportunity is available to all WHA member hospitals. Additionally, a separate GFO will soon be introduced, focusing on Dane/Dodge, Brown/Outagamie, and Milwaukee/Racine/Waukesha counties.

Please complete this brief [survey](#) to express your interest in learning more about these opportunities.

### Your Quality Improvement Team

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