

**Q**uality of care can mean different things to different people. For example, quality health care is:

- Doing the right thing (getting the health care services you need)
- At the right time (when you need them)
- In the right way (using the appropriate test or procedure)
- To achieve the best possible outcome
- Striking the right balance between overuse of services, underuse of services and misuse of services.

Quality varies on where you live and can vary from one doctor's office to another doctor's office across the street. For instance, the national standard for providing clot-busting drugs to those suffering a heart attack is within 30 minutes of a patient's arrival to the hospital. However, this varies from state to state, from a low of 20 minutes in one state to a high of 140 minutes in another state. ([www.ahrq.com](http://www.ahrq.com))

Clinical measures are often used to access quality of care in addition to patient satisfaction. Three common examples are diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness, leg amputations not resulting from trauma, and kidney disease. Five measures can be used to access the quality of care for diabetes:

- 1) Hemoglobin A1c (blood glucose testing) every 3 months.
- 2) Regular cholesterol testing.
- 3) Annual retinal eye exam.
- 4) Annual foot exam.
- 5) Annual flu shot.

Heart disease is a collection of diseases of the heart and blood vessels that includes heart attack, stroke, and congestive heart failure. Approximately 64 million Americans have some form of heart disease and it is the number one cause of death in the U. S.

Quality of care measures for individuals age 18 and older include:

- Blood pressure measurement.

- Cholesterol testing.

Additional measures for those with known heart disease include:

- If you smoke, stop smoking
- If you suffer a heart attack, you should be given an aspirin within 24 hours of admission to the hospital and a beta-blocker should be prescribed upon hospital discharge.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the U.S. Lung, colorectal, breast and prostate cancers account for over half of the new cases reported each year.

Examples of quality measures include:

- Mammography for women over 40.
- Pap smears for women over 18.
- Fecal occult blood testing annually
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy/colonoscopy beginning at age 50.

Quality of care information can be found online and in print from multiple resources. A brief listing of resources is provided below.

### **Hospitals**

[www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

[www.qualitycheck.org/consumer/searchQCR.aspx](http://www.qualitycheck.org/consumer/searchQCR.aspx)

[www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov](http://www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov)

### **Nursing Homes**

[www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/home.asp](http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/home.asp)

### **Physicians**

[www.ama-](http://www.ama-)

[assn.org/ama/pbu/category/3158.html](http://assn.org/ama/pbu/category/3158.html)

[www.osteopathic.org/osteopathic/find-a-do/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.osteopathic.org/osteopathic/find-a-do/Pages/default.aspx)

[www.docboard.org](http://www.docboard.org)

[www.docinfo.org](http://www.docinfo.org)

### **Other quality measures**

[www.ahrq.gov/consumer/](http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/)

[www.guideline.gov](http://www.guideline.gov)

[www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)

<http://clinicaltrials.gov>

How may I assist you in determining the quality of care provided by the physician or facility at issue in your case?