



News Release
April 1, 2008

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Women's Health Leader Says New 'Patient Charter' is Critical Building Block in Drive to Improve Quality of Care for Patients

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today's announcement that leading consumer and employer groups have forged an agreement with physician organizations and health insurers on principles to guide measurement and reporting on physician performance is a significant step toward improving the quality of care for patients in this country, according to one of the nation's leading consumer health advocates, National Partnership for Women & Families President Debra L. Ness.

Unveiled today, the new "Patient Charter for Physician Performance Measurement, Reporting and Tiering Programs" is a set of principles that will guide health plans in measuring doctors' performance and reporting the information to consumers. Ness hailed it as a way to promote better decision making and more patient-centered care. "This is a critical building block in the effort to improve the quality of health care in this country," she said. "Right now in the United States, patients have no more than a 50/50 chance of getting the right care at the right time for the right reason. Poor care takes a terrible toll in lives diminished or lost and health dollars wasted. It disproportionately affects women and people of color, and diverts precious resources from imperatives like providing health insurance coverage for all people. The agreement reached today can begin to change that by putting patients first and giving them the tools they need to make the best possible choices about their medical care."

"For too long, health plans and doctors have been at odds and patients have suffered as a result," Ness continued. "Today, it is easier to find information about a dishwasher you want to buy than a doctor who may hold your life in her/his hands. Consumers need meaningful information about quality and cost so they can make informed choices and sound decisions about where they get their care and how they spend their health care dollars. The new 'Patient Charter' calls for complete transparency, measurement based on sound science, input from consumers to ensure that the information reported is useful to them, and input from doctors to ensure fairness."

In addition to the National Partnership, the new "Patient Charter" was endorsed by AARP, AFL-CIO, Leapfrog Group, National Business Coalition on Health, and Pacific Business Group on Health, with support from the American College of Physicians, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Medical Association, American College of Cardiology, and American College of Surgeons. Insurers who have agreed to adopt the "Patient Charter" include Aetna, Cigna, UnitedHealthcare, Wellpoint and America's Health Insurance Plans.

"Patients win if this 'Charter' is implemented broadly," Ness concluded. "We thank all parties for coming to the table and joining us in the hard work needed to reach this agreement. Now it's

time to put it into practice. This is a critical piece of the health care reform our nation urgently needs.”

Where it is followed, the “Patient Charter” is designed to ensure that:

- Consumers can make more informed decisions based on both quality and cost, with adequate guidance about how to use the information;
- Both consumers and physicians have input into the measurement process and how results are reported. This will help ensure that information is trusted by physicians and meaningful to consumers;
- Measurement is based on sound national standards and methodology.
- Measurement is a transparent process so that both consumers and physicians can understand the basis upon which performance is being measured and reported;
- Physicians have adequate notice and opportunity to correct any errors. There will be no surprises and no black boxes; and
- Physicians will have information that helps them improve the quality of care they provide.

The agreement was spearheaded by the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project (<http://healthcaredisclosure.org/>), a group of leading consumer, labor and employer organizations that works to ensure that all Americans have access to publicly reported health care performance information. It is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

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The National Partnership for Women & Families is a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care, and policies that help women and men create a balance between work and family responsibilities. For more information, visit www.nationalpartnership.org/.



Nonprofit Publisher
of Consumer Reports

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, April 1, 2008

Contact: Steven Findlay
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New Effort to Help Put Better Information about Doctors in Consumers' Hands

Initiative to standardize way health insurers report on the performance of doctors

(Washington D.C.) – An initiative launched today to standardize the way health insurers measure and report on the performance of doctors will help put valuable information in consumers' hands, better enabling them to choose among doctors, according to Consumers Union, the non-profit publisher of *Consumer Reports*.

The initiative – dubbed the “Patient Charter for Physician Performance Measurement, Reporting and Tiering Programs” – is spearheaded by the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project, a coalition of employer, consumer, and labor groups with a common goal of enhancing consumer access to data and information on health care providers. (www.healthcaredisclosure.org).

Consumers Union is a member of the coalition, which is supported with a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

“Consumers today have almost no objective information and data on how good, bad or mediocre their doctors are – a very frustrating situation that is no longer acceptable,” said Steven Findlay, a health care analyst at Consumers Union and managing editor of *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs*. “The Charter recognizes that health insurers gather a tremendous amount of data on doctors, and that they have an important role to play in improving the quality of care doctors deliver.”

“The Charter will help guide insurers as more and more of them deploy the data they have on physicians. It also will help guide them as they publicly report this information in a way consumers can understand and act on, including tools to choose among doctors,” added Findlay, who serves on the steering committee of the Disclosure Project.



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National Business Coalition on Health Endorses Patient Charter for Physician Performance Measurement

*Patient Charter requirements will be integrated into
NBCH's common RFI, eValue8™*

WASHINGTON – March 25, 2008 – The National Business Coalition on Health (NBCH), a non-profit, membership association of 60 business and health coalitions, representing a national network of 7,000 employers and 34 million covered lives, announced its support of the *Patient Charter for Physician Performance Measurement, Reporting, and Tiering Programs*. The Patient Charter has been developed by a group of leading employer, consumer, and labor organizations including NBCH, working toward a common goal to ensure that all Americans have access to publicly reported health care performance information.

The Patient Charter establishes specific criteria for health plans developing physician performance measurement programs to ensure the integrity, validity, and fairness of these important initiatives. The Patient Charter then calls on any health plan that is developing programs to evaluate and rate physicians – programs that NBCH and its member coalitions have asked for – to undergo a comprehensive independent review.

“Public reporting of physician performance is central to health care system improvement and empowering consumers with the information they need to make informed decisions about their physicians and the care they receive,” said Andrew Webber, president and CEO of NBCH. “Independent review is necessary to help build public trust and confidence in the physician measurement, incentives, and reporting initiatives that health plans are generating throughout the nation. We encourage employers, as purchasers of health care, to ensure that their contracted health plans comply with the provisions of the Patient Charter.”

NBCH also announced today its commitment to promote the Patient Charter by integrating Charter requirements into eValue8, the common Request for Information (RFI). eValue8 was created by NBCH for member coalitions and the employer community to assess the performance of health plans. Currently used by 20 coalitions and hundreds of leading corporations to measure the performance of 200 health plans, eValue8 will be modified to make clear that the employer community expects health plans to comply with the Patient Charter.

About the National Business Coalition on Health and eValue8

NBCH is a national, non-profit, membership organization of 60 employer-based health care coalitions, representing over 7,000 employers and 34 million employees and their dependents across the United States. NBCH and its members are dedicated to value based purchasing of health care services through the collective action of public and private purchasers. eValue8™ is a product of the National Business Coalition on Health and is the nation's leading evidence-based request for information (RFI) tool used by coalitions and major employers to assess and manage the quality of their health care vendors. For additional information visit www.nbch.org.

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PBGH Endorses Agreement on Principles to Guide Physician Performance Reporting

San Francisco, Calif. (April 1, 2008) – The Pacific Business Group on Health (PBGH) today announced its endorsement of the “Patient Charter for Physician Performance Measurement, Reporting and Tiering Programs”. PBGH has long worked to improve the quality and affordability of health care by giving patients information that will allow them to make more informed choices based on the quality and value provided. The Patient Charter is a key step in assuring both patients and providers that the information used for health care decision making is reliable and fair, and PBGH has encouraged leading physician groups and health plans to commit to its principles.

Other employer, consumer and labor groups also are endorsing the Patient Charter --- the Leapfrog Group, the National Business Coalition on Health, AARP, AFL-CIO, and the National Partnership for Women & Families. Many leading physician groups and health insurers are also supporting these principles that guide measuring and reporting to patients about doctors’ performance.

“Measuring performance and using that information to inform quality improvement, patient choice and payment is integral to any comprehensive health care reform,” said David Lansky, President & CEO of PBGH. “The Patient Charter fosters doing measurement right, which is a needed foundation for change. PBGH will build our expectation that health plans abide by the Patient Charter into our requests for proposals with major health plans.”

By encouraging fair and accurate measurement, the hope is that the Patient Charter will foster a health care system that rewards meaningful improvement and higher value. This effort builds on the knowledge that there is huge variation in the quality and cost of health care services. There cannot be movement to higher quality and more cost effective care without valid performance information.

“The Patient Charter addresses the need for a consistent national solution to the challenge of measuring physician performance, while preserving local innovation to improve care,” said Peter V. Lee, Executive Director for National Policy at PBGH, and co-chair of the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project which organized the Patient Charter effort. “The Patient Charter provides a clear path forward in a controversial area so all parties can focus on what is most important: improving care.”

The Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project is a group of leading consumer, labor and employer organizations, including PBGH that works to ensure that all Americans have access to publicly reported health care performance information. The Project is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation along with support from participating organizations. For more information on the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project or the Patient Charter, go to www.healthcaredisclosure.org.

PBGH is a California-based association of 50 of the nation’s largest purchasers of health care focused on improving the quality and availability of affordable health care. PBGH represents public and private health care purchasers who cover more than three million retirees, employees and their families, and who are responsible for \$10 billion in annual health care expenditures. Since 1989, PBGH has promoted public reporting of data at every level of the health care system to improve performance among health care providers and to help consumers make better choices.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 1, 2008

**AMA SUPPORTS COALITION'S CALL FOR TRANSPARENCY
AND ACCURATE REPORTING AMONG HEALTH INSURERS**

Statement attributed to:

Nancy Nielsen, M.D.
AMA President elect

“The American Medical Association applauds efforts by the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project to raise the bar on the reliability and validity of information that health insurers provide to patients.

“The Patient Charter drafted by the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project requires health insurers to be more transparent and balanced when providing information to patients. These crucial principles offer hope that patients will be able to trust the information to make informed health care choices. Safeguards must ensure that physician rating information does not result in reduced access to care or disrupt patients’ longstanding relationships with their physicians.

“Efforts by health insurers to rate physicians must not be driven solely by costs and economics. The primary goal of these programs must be to promote quality care using meaningful measures. The AMA has long been involved in these efforts through the Physician Consortium for Performance Improvement and National Quality Forum.

“Instead of tiered and narrow networks, the AMA believes that providing valid data to physicians and patients will better improve the quality and efficiency of care.

“The work of the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project reinforces the need to protect access to care and the patient-physician relationship by requiring insurers to open their physician rating programs for careful evaluation to assess accuracy, integrity and fairness.

“Although additional work must be done to accurately and fairly evaluate the individual work of physicians, the AMA sees the Patient Charter as an important step in the right direction and we offer our assistance in ensuring its criteria are appropriate and measurable.”

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AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS SUPPORTS THE PATIENT CHARTER FOR PHYSICIAN PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

The American College of Surgeons is strongly supportive of the efforts of the Consumer Purchaser Disclosure Project to ensure the accuracy, transparency and fairness of public reporting of physician performance information.

We believe that consumers and patients should have meaningful and valid information on which to base decisions about their physicians and the care they receive. Independent review of the design and implementation of health plan programs that evaluate and rate physicians for consumers will promote accuracy, consistency, efficiency and fairness of such programs.

We applaud the Patient Charter for Physician Performance Measurement, Reporting and Tiering Programs as an important step in improving the quality of information available to consumers. Physicians have grave concerns about performance measurement programs that do not reflect the true quality of care and may be ultimately misleading to patients. The Charter's call for transparency, validity, and appropriate measurement, engagement of physicians who are being measured in the review process, and adherence to national standards for measurement and reporting will benefit both physicians and patients.

The American College of Surgeons is a scientific and educational association of surgeons that was founded in 1913 to improve the quality of care for the surgical patient by setting high standards for surgical education and practice. The College currently has over 73,000 members, including more than 4,000 Fellows in other countries, making it the largest organization of surgeons in the world.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
April 1, 2008

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STATEMENT FROM NCQA PRESIDENT MARGARET E. O'KANE ON THE CONSUMER-PURCHASER DISCLOSURE PROJECT PATIENT CHARTER

WASHINGTON—Margaret E. O’Kane, President of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), made the following statement regarding the release of the Patient Charter for Physician Performance Measurement, Reporting and Tiering Programs issued today by the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project:

“Selecting the right doctor is the most important health care choice a consumer can make. Trustworthy, understandable data on physician quality goes a long way towards helping patients make an informed selection. The Patient Charter is important because not only does it clearly signal the strong desire among purchasers and patients for measuring physician performance, it sharpens the line between the right way and the wrong way to do so.

“Since 2006, we at NCQA have evaluated the provider measurement efforts of more than three dozen health plans through our *Physician and Hospital Quality* program. This program shares many of the same principles as the Patient Charter – reliable data based on national standards, physician involvement and transparent, understandable methodology.

“NCQA is proud to serve as the ratings examiner for three of the health plans in New York that reached agreements with the state’s Attorney General. The Patient Charter lays out what patients and purchasers expect from physician measurement initiatives. We’re proud to join so many others in endorsing the charter’s principles.”

NCQA is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to improving health care quality. NCQA is the nation’s leading developer of health care evaluation tools including health plan accreditation, physician recognition and organization certification. NCQA also is responsible for the development and evolution of HEDIS[®], the most widely used set of health care performance measures. NCQA is committed to providing health care quality information through the Web, media and data licensing agreements in order to help consumers, employers and others make more informed health choices. For more information, visit www.ncqa.org.



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URAC announces support for principles of Disclosure Project's Patient Charter

Accreditation organization revising standards to include review of physician quality measurement programs to enhance transparency

Washington, D.C. April 1, 2008 – URAC, one of the nation's leading independent accrediting organizations, announced today its support for the general principles put forward by the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project in its Patient Charter for Physician Performance, Measurement and Tiering Programs. The Patient Charter is supported by leading consumer, labor and employer groups and aligns with URAC's work over the past four years to enhance consumer education, safety and empowerment through its accreditation programs.

The support comes the same day URAC invites public comments for revisions to its Health Plan and Health Network accreditation programs. Among the revisions are specific standards applicable to those organizations that implement and publicly report on their physician quality measurement programs. URAC is interested in public feedback to its proposed standards that will support the principles described in the Patient Charter.

The Patient Charter calls for health plans to initiate independent assessment of physician quality and to inform consumers of performance results. Specifically, the Patient Charter calls for accrediting organizations such as URAC to "review the plan's programs for consumers that measure, report and tier physicians based on their performance." Measures used by health plans should be meaningful to consumers and should include quality measures across a number of clinical activities.

Beginning with URAC's groundbreaking Consumer Education and Support Accreditation standards introduced in 2005 and continuing through the latest revisions to its Accreditation Standards, URAC has increasingly raised the bar for health care management organizations to proactively address the expanding consumer need for information to make wise health care choices.

"These revisions reflect URAC's ongoing leadership to support consumers and purchasers and enhance transparency so they can wisely assess health care value and make key health care decisions," said Alan P. Spielman, URAC's president and CEO. "URAC has been building this foundation with health care organizations over the past several years with our emphasis on the Institute of Medicine's six aims for safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable, and patient-centered care."

Spielman said URAC will evaluate its techniques and enhance accreditation standards based on the nature of the public comments received and in consideration of the principles outlined by the Disclosure Project Patient Charter. Further support for the principles will also be considered as part of URAC's interpretive guidance during the accreditation process.

“We have seen quality standards develop over the years as a multi-stage process,” Spielman said. “The principles brought forward by the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project bring needed attention in support of this process.”

“Health care measurement and public reporting are powerful mechanisms to drive improvements in quality and efficiency,” said Peter Lee, co-chair of the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project and executive director for national health policy of the Pacific Business Group on Health. “Independent review of health plans against the Patient Charter’s principles is essential to assure credibility of physician performance measurement programs nationally.”

For more information about the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project, go to <http://healthcaredisclosure.org>.

About URAC

URAC, an independent, nonprofit organization, is well-known as a leader in promoting health care quality through its accreditation and education programs. URAC offers a wide range of quality benchmarking programs and services that keep pace with the rapid changes in the health care system, and provide a symbol of excellence for organizations to validate their commitment to quality and accountability. Through its broad-based governance structure and an inclusive standards development process, URAC ensures that all stakeholders are represented in establishing meaningful quality measures for the entire health care industry. For more information, visit www.uran.org.

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