

Journal Focuses On VA Health Services Research

The November 2004 issue of *The American Journal of Managed Care* highlights VA's journey to becoming a leader in quality health care. The first article, authored by Dr. Jonathan Perlin, VA's Acting Under Secretary for Health, discusses how and why VA pursued a radical transformation of its healthcare system in the 1990's. In moving from an inpatient to an outpatient model of care, VA leadership – at all levels – made sure that the quality of care was not only maintained but was improved during the dramatic organizational transformation. Despite several obstacles discussed in the article that will be of interest to other large health care organizations, the transformation was a success. Today, the VA is recognized for its leadership in clinical informatics and performance improvement, and sets national benchmarks in patient care and satisfaction.

The articles in this journal present a variety of HSR investigations designed to showcase the breadth of VA research and its applicability to non-VA settings. Three articles address different aspects of the electronic medical record and the use of administrative data to assess healthcare quality. For example, VA researchers found that the development and incorporation of a computerized clinical reminder (CCR) system into an electronic medical record does not guarantee that it will be used. One study showed that the most commonly implemented CCRs were for conditions with VA national performance measures such as tobacco cessation, immunizations, and diabetes, while the least commonly used CCRs were for conditions without current performance measures. In another article, Piette and colleagues focus on the important issue of cost-related medication underuse, specifically among chronically ill adults. Investigators compared problems due to medications costs among VA patients with those who have Medicaid, private health insurance, Medicare, and no insurance coverage. Results of this study showed that VA patients were less likely than patients with Medicare or no health insurance coverage to report cutting back on medication use due to cost pressures. This is, in part, due to the fact that VA provides more prescription benefits for its patients.

As one of the largest healthcare systems in the country, the VA is in a unique position to analyze all aspects of care and report the results to help guide other healthcare organizations. This journal presents information that will resonate with those in managed care who confront similar issues.

The American Journal of Managed Care November 2004, Part 2, VA Health Services Research.
<http://www.ajmc.com/ViewIssue.cfm?id=1987>