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THE ASSOCIATION FOR PROFESSIONALS IN INFECTION CONTROL AND EPIDEMIOLOGY

APIC Comments to the National Quality Forum (NQF) Report

Data for Systematic Improvement: Summarizing an NQF Meeting on the Data Needed for Sustainably Improving Healthcare

June 15, 2015

Background:

"NQF is convening individuals from across stakeholder groups and experts to advance the discussion on data needed in healthcare to inform and support systematic improvement in care. This work will consider challenges and barriers that limit data availability for widespread and large-scale improvement and system transformation efforts, as well as best practices to overcome them. It will also identify the data and data infrastructure necessary for spreading successful models for improving healthcare, especially where lack of data inhibits spread. This project aims to spread lessons broadly learned about the use of data for systematic improvement, spur action across stakeholders, and identify an action agenda for moving the field forward."

Comment:

The Association for Professionals in Infection Prevention and Epidemiology (APIC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the National Quality Forum (NQF) draft white paper on *Data for Systematic Improvement*.

- APIC endorses the need for a robust data infrastructure that will serve to provide a systems approach to improving and sustaining healthcare.
- APIC underscores the importance of identifying appropriate, meaningful and actionable data, with emphasis on streamlining the number of measures collected, thereby targeting improvement efforts.
- APIC agrees with the challenges of interoperability and the inability to link disparate data sources and recognizes the need to overcome this issue as paramount in order to develop a robust data infrastructure.
- The challenge of "trust in data" is an ever present barrier in the healthcare environment. Standardized definitions, risk adjustment, and collection methodology, as well as input from stakeholders can serve to help resolve these trust issues over time.
- Accessibility to shared, evidence-based prevention strategy data is a key to sustained improvement activities.
- Although the electronic health record (EHR) is often seen as the solution to all data needs and accessibility, this is not necessarily the case. Methods need to be found to maximize access to data contained in the EHR and to minimize the cost associated with that access.
- APIC conveys that although access to digital information may appear to be improving in some arenas, there are still many organizations with disparate data systems that will take years to align.
- We recommend an additional "Strategy to Move Forward" for Healthcare Organizations: "Strengthen and align information technology prioritization methods to include databases related to quality and improvement activities in order to provide relevant, timely data." This must be done before data can be used effectively.
- Finally, APIC agrees that patient, consumers and the public are important partners in the effort to continually improve and sustain improvements in healthcare.