American Institutes for Research

Quality and Patient-Reported Outcomes

Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS) Network Center (Ongoing)

AIR serves as the PROMIS Network Center (PNC), managing a consortium of NIH research grantees and helping standardize the assessment of patient-reported outcomes across chronic diseases. This research will help improve clinical trial providers and policymakers develop more helpful medical treatments and health programs for the U.S. population.

Adult Sickle Cell Quality of Life Measurement Information System (Ongoing)

Supported by NHLBI, AIR developed and field tested a health-related quality-of-life questionnaire to document health outcomes resulting from interventions designed to improve the care of adults with sickle cell disease. More than 500 adults nationwide took part in the field test of the Web-enabled Adult Sickle Cell Quality of Life Measurement Information System (ASCO-Me). These data were analyzed using Item Response Theory and classical psychometric methods to choose the questions that provided the most precise and robust data. Administrative platforms include fixed-format questionnaires, Interactive Voice Response interviews, and computer-adaptive testing to dynamically tailor question administration.

Developing the CAHPS Survey for Cancer Care (Ongoing)

AIR and the Mayo Clinic are working together to create the first Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) Survey designed for a specific illness. The CAHPS Cancer Care Survey will assess the performance of cancer care providers from the patient’s perspective. This tool will also help measure patient-centered care in an integrated disease management system. At the conclusion of the study, AHRQ, AIR, and the Mayo Clinic will seek adoption of the survey as a CAHPS product by the CAHPS Consortium and endorsement by the National Quality Forum.

Health Information Technology

Evaluation of the Regional Extension Center Program (Ongoing)

AIR leads the evaluation of the $667-million Regional Extension Center (REC) grant program for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of the Coordinator of Health Information Technology. The REC program funds 82 Regional Extension Centers that are intended to help more than 100,000 primary care providers meaningfully use electronic health records (EHRs). AIR’s mixed-method evaluation of the REC program will assess the program’s impact on the adoption and use of EHRs among eligible providers and achievement of “meaningful use.”

Supporting the Medicaid Electronic Health Record Program (Ongoing)

Supported by CMS, AIR is working with the Urban Institute to programmatic, legislative, and regulatory analysis; training and technical assistance; and development of Web-based technical assistance tools to support the Medicaid EHR Incentive Payment Program. The project includes a comparative analysis of the plans for health information technology (HIT) implementation developed by State Medicaid Agencies (SMAs), development of online training materials, and the development of a Web-based repository consisting of best practices and lessons learned by "early implementer" SMAs. It also includes the development of a state-of-the-art, multiuser dashboard that will generate HIT profiles and target technical assistance to the states.

American Institutes for Research

About AIR

American Institutes for Research (AIR) provides a wide range of health services research, policy analysis, evaluation, coordinating center, and technical assistance services to government, foundation, and industry clients. We provide the full range of quantitative, qualitative, and observational studies; statistical analysis of administrative and survey data; psychometric analysis; performance measurement; survey design; case studies; key informant interviews; focus groups; cognitive and usability testing; delibrative groups; critical incident studies; content analysis; website design; and management of complex projects. Our staff and our culture are our greatest strengths.

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Support of Transparency Efforts by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Ongoing)

AIR is working with AHRQ and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) to help the USPSTF redesign its public comment solicitation and review process, with the goal of optimizing the transparency of recommendations. In addition to determining best practices for increasing transparency, AIR will conduct a Lean Rapid Improvement Event to identify improvements to the USPSTF public comment process. AIR’s work also includes developing plans to disseminate and promote the new public comment process to the public, clinicians, and other key stakeholders.

American Institutes for Research

Comparative Effectiveness Research

Community Forum (Ongoing)

AIR is leading the creation of the Community Forum on Effective Health Care, a groundbreaking 3-year initiative to identify innovative and effective approaches for expanding public and stakeholder participation in comparative effectiveness and patient-centered outcomes research. Funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), the goal of this initiative is to expand and systematize public and stakeholder engagement in the process of identifying research needs, designing studies, and interpreting and disseminating results. Led by AIR, the diverse team of organizations and consultants working on this project will design, implement, and evaluate various deliberative processes for eliciting public input; support a 20-member Effective Health Care Stakeholder Group; and build upon current approaches to working with stakeholders.

Translating Comparative Effectiveness Reports for Consumers and Clinicians (Ongoing)

AIR supports the John M. Eisenberg Clinical Decisions and Communications Science Center in developing practical information for consumers and clinicians to use in making evidence-based health care treatment decisions. AIR’s formative research helps guide the development of materials that summarize evidence from comparative effectiveness reviews. This involves conducting focus groups and indepth ("cognitive") testing with clinicians and consumers to identify key messages and user needs and to evaluate draft materials for readability and usability.

Support for Transparency Efforts by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Ongoing)

AIR is leading a team of organizations to develop, implement, and evaluate a guide to promote patient and family engagement in hospital safety and quality. Funded by AHRQ, the project reflects an important step toward safer, higher quality care by facilitating the involvement of patients and families in improving hospital experiences, care delivery, and outcomes. The “Guide to Patient and Family Engagement” includes evidence-based strategies that represent critical opportunities for hospital leaders, clinicians, staff, patients, and families to work together on hospital safety and quality. After the Guide materials are developed and formatted, they will be implemented and evaluated in several diverse hospitals. The mixed-methods evaluation will assess how the Guide affects key outcomes, including patient and family engagement, staff satisfaction, and organizational culture. The final phase of the project involves strategic outreach and dissemination of the Guide.

Consumer Engagement

Guide To Support Patient and Family Engagement in Hospital Quality and Safety (Ongoing)

AIR is leading a team of organizations to develop, implement, and evaluate a guide to promote patient and family engagement in hospital safety and quality. Funded by AHRQ, the project reflects an important step toward safer, higher quality care by facilitating the involvement of patients and families in improving hospital experiences, care delivery, and outcomes. The “Guide to Patient and Family Engagement” includes evidence-based strategies that represent critical opportunities for hospital leaders, clinicians, staff, patients, and families to work together on hospital safety and quality. After the Guide materials are developed and formatted, they will be implemented and evaluated in several diverse hospitals. The mixed-methods evaluation will assess how the Guide affects key outcomes, including patient and family engagement, staff satisfaction, and organizational culture. The final phase of the project involves strategic outreach and dissemination of the Guide.
Supporting Consumer Engagement in Aligning Forces for Quality Communities (Ongoing)

AIR leads efforts to support broader consumer engagement in health and health care for Aligning Forces for Quality Communities. AIR, through the National Program Office at The George Washington University, provides technical support for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s $300-million signature effort to lift America’s health and health care for Aligning Forces for National Reform. AIR helps alliances gather consumer consultation, coaching, training, and tailored product development. AIR works with consumers, step-by-step information to help organizations understand how to communicate effectively, and lessons learned from an 18-month implementation and evaluation project. AIR continues to maintain and update the Communication Toolkit, available online at www.businessgrouphealth.org/ using information.

Health Disparities Program Outcomes Evaluation (Completed)

AIR examined the feasibility of conducting an outcomes evaluation for the National Institute of Nursing Research Health Disparities Program, an effort that supports research to reduce and eliminate health disparities in disadvantaged populations. As part of the feasibility study, AIR conducted a literature review; developed a conceptual framework of health disparities and an evaluation logic model; interviewed key stakeholders; conducted a bibliometric and content analysis of publications associated with grants funded by the program; and analyzed data from the National Institute of Health (NIH) IMPAC II database. The results of these tasks informed an evaluation plan that presented alternate approaches to outcomes evaluation with advantages, disadvantages, and estimated budgets for each.

Health Care Delivery System Organization Reducing Waste and Inefficiency: Use of Lean in Health Care Settings (Ongoing)

For AHRQ, AIR is examining the use of Lean/Toyota Production System—an industrial engineering technique that aims to eliminate waste—in various health care settings to identify how to apply Lean successfully in health care. The project includes a literature review to identify contextual factors that help and hinder Lean implementation, along with case studies to tell the Lean stories at five health care delivery systems. Case study methods include interviews, digital diaries, site visits, and collection of documentation to inform recommendations for Lean implementation. AIR will study a total of 13 Lean projects and construction of a hospital built using Lean techniques across five organizations.

For a similar project funded by the California HealthCare Foundation, AIR is working with the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission to evaluate the effects of a quality-based reimbursement program. In July 2009, the state of Maryland modified its payment structure for acute inpatient stays at non-Federal hospitals to include a pay-for-performance component based on adherence to guidelines and avoidance of preventable complications. AIR will evaluate the use of these quality indicators as part of the reimbursement algorithm in terms of organizational issues, quality, cost, and disparities.

Medicare’s Future (Completed)

For the Medicare’s Future project, AIR investigated how changes in Medicare policy would affect the program’s sustainability and individuals’ access to care. With a grant from the Commonwealth Fund, AIR estimated the financial impact of selected Medicare policy changes on Medicare Parts A, B, C, and D, developing a microsimulation model to project the impact of policy options on beneficiaries’ future cost-sharing requirements, out-of-pocket costs and premiums, and on Medicare program solvency. AIR presented analysis findings in three policy briefs designed to educate and inform leaders and policymakers.

Helping States Improve Their Medicare Services (Ongoing)

AIR runs the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) Resource Center and the National Performance Report (NPR) program for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). AIR works with CMS’ 54 SHIPS across the country, providing information and technical assistance to help them sustain and improve their free, unbiased, health insurance counseling and education programs to more than 2 million Medicare beneficiaries per year. For the NPR initiative, AIR’s work includes secure Web databases for data collection and reporting, a sophisticated method for benchmarking and assessing state performance, a data dashboard, and daily technical assistance and training to approximately 15,000 NPR counselors and Web database users.

Finance and Insurance
Evaluation of the Maryland Quality-Based Reimbursement System (Ongoing)

In a project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, AIR is working with the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission to evaluate the effects of a quality-based reimbursement program. In July 2009, the state of Maryland modified its payment structure for acute inpatient stays at non-Federal hospitals to include a pay-for-performance component based on adherence to guidelines and avoidance of preventable complications. AIR will evaluate the use of these quality indicators as part of the reimbursement algorithm in terms of organizational issues, quality, cost, and disparities.

Making Research Relevant

Standardizing Antibiotic Use in Long-Term Care Settings (Ongoing)

AIR, Texas A&M’s School of Rural Public Health, and the TMF Health Quality Institute are developing and testing a tool to optimize antimicrobial therapy administered to nursing home patients, with the goal of improving patient outcomes and ensuring cost-effective therapy while controlling bacterial resistance. This project uses an iterative process to test and assess the tool including usability testing, cognitive testing, a small-scale trial with 4 nursing homes, and a field test with 12 nursing homes.
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Health Care Delivery System Organization

Reducing Waste and Inefficiency: Use of Lean in Health Care Settings (Ongoing)

For AHRO, AIR is examining the use of Lean/Toyota Production System—an industrial engineering technique that aims to eliminate waste—in various health care settings to identify how to apply Lean successfully in health care. The project includes a literature review to identify contextual factors that help and hinder Lean implementation, along with case studies to tell the Lean stories at five health care delivery systems. Case study methods include interviews, digital diaries, site visits, and collection of documentation to inform recommendations for Lean implementation. AIR will study a total of 13 Lean projects and construction of a hospital built using Lean techniques across five organizations.

Health Disparities Evaluation of the Community Health Worker Initiative and We Can!® Programs (Ongoing)

AIR’s evaluation of two National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute community-based initiatives will contribute to improved service delivery and a better understanding of the effectiveness of community-based programs for health promotion. The Community Health Worker Initiative (CHWI) program, designed to prevent heart disease among adults by using culturally appropriate curricula, is delivered by trained community members with Latinx, American Indian, Filipino, African American, and Alaska Natives across the United States. On the basis of results of an outcomes evaluation, AIR will recommend modifications to the program, develop a plan for future evaluation of the enhanced initiative, and design and test an improved community evaluation toolkit. AIR is also developing a large-scale national evaluation plan for the We Can!® program, designed to prevent childhood obesity through community-level interventions directed to children and their parents.

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Making Research Relevant

Supporting Consumer Engagement in Aligning Forces for Quality Communities (Ongoing)

AIR researchers developed The Communication Toolkit, a free online resource that contains evidence-based materials and guidance to help organizations communicate with consumers about finding good quality health care, making wise health care decisions, and being informed health care consumers. Developed with funding from the California HealthCare Foundation, the Toolkit is based on research conducted by AIR about the challenges involved in communicating with consumers about these topics. The Toolkit contains customizable documents for direct use with consumers, step-by-step information to help organizations understand how to communicate effectively, and lessons learned from an 18-month implementation and evaluation project. AIR continues to maintain and update the Communication Toolkit, available online at www.businessgrouphealth.org/usinginformation.
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Comparative Effectiveness Research

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