

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

What Does Health Reform Mean to the Healthcare Quality Professional?

Two seemingly unrelated issues are occupying my mind as we near the holiday season. One is that Thanksgiving is just 2 weeks away and, like you, I'm beginning to reflect on things for which I'm grateful. At the same time, I can't shake the thought of health reform. Its affect on us and our colleagues in healthcare is so profound, both personally and professionally, that I'm glued to daily news reports on changes in reform proposals, one just having been approved by the House. (See "Major Health Reform Bills Include Quality Provisions" in the Industry Trends section.)

I suppose that for the purpose of this message, I could try to find a connection between these ideas—something to do with pioneers forging uncharted territory and making unusual alliances, etc.—but to tell you the truth, I'm more occupied with this question: What does health reform mean to the healthcare quality professional? The more I ponder this, the more I agree with Dr. Maulik Joshi's comments at our recent conference in Grapevine, TX, that no matter what happens legislatively, we're going to get reform, period. In fact, it's already happening and being fueled daily by the dubious state of our economy and businesses. There seems little question that there's a drive toward reforming our current healthcare system.

As we look forward, there is no doubt that quality will be a core focus of reform and how we measure its effectiveness. Consider electronic data. As this topic receives more attention and funding under reform, it will become more and more integrated into the fabric of our professional culture and everyday lives. Electronic data will be central to what we do and will prompt us to lead others during this transformation. As such, we'll need to focus on, not only collecting the right data, but understanding the analytics behind the data so we can convey the case for quality improvement to people in our organizations and communities. This is critical for measuring quality outcomes—and, frankly, our value as quality professionals.

On second thought, there is a clear tie between health reform and my Thanksgiving message to you: As NAHQ's executive director, I'm grateful for the quality professionals who are committed to developing the future, moving us to the next stage of evolution, improving care and our system for providing care, and helping to ensure all Americans have access to quality healthcare.

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone.

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NAHQ Executive Director