

Hospitals may now be more willing to partner up with former adversaries

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Drug Trials

A study publishing in the latest issue of Health Services Research is one the few published evaluations of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Quality Improvement Organizations (QIO).

Focusing on patients hospitalized with acute myocardial infarction, researchers found an overall positive perceived impact of QIOs on the quality of hospital care.

Their findings suggest that QIOs have overcome, to some degree, the previously adversarial and punitive roles of their predecessors, the Peer Review Organizations.

The feedback they received points to the need for contact with doctors and upper-level management. "While hospitals no longer view QIOs as adversaries? their impact as partners can be strengthened if they can have more direct and influential relationships with physicians and senior management at the hospital," the authors state.

As the primary means by which the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services promotes quality health care throughout the country's hospitals, nursing homes, and home care, QIOs affect 40 million beneficiaries.

The researchers conducted interviews with 100 directors of quality management from a randomly selected cross-section of all acute care hospitals operating in 2001.

More than ninety percent of the hospitals reported that QIOs had initiated specific interventions, most commonly providing educational materials, benchmark data, and hospital performance data.

The majority of respondents, sixty percent, rated QIO interventions as "helpful" or "very helpful." The generally positive view of QIOs suggests that they are poised to take a leading role in promoting quality of care. "However, to fulfill this leadership role effectively, QIOs will need to find ways to integrate physicians and hospital senior management more fully into QIO quality improvement initiatives," the authors conclude.