A critical part of health program evaluation involves monitoring performance, as measured by indicators of quality of care and patient safety. Process and outcomes measures guide informed choice, can be applied to pay-for-performance, and help identify opportunities for improvement. Measuring healthcare quality can be challenging, however, because the amount, types, and validity of data available vary considerably from program to program and across care settings. Measuring – and then publicly reporting – healthcare quality as accurately and completely as possible requires a combination of experience, objectivity, and technical proficiency.

**An objective approach**
Abt Associates is a worldwide leader in collecting and analyzing data on the use of healthcare services – and in evaluating the clinical, quality-of-life, patient safety, and economic outcomes of that care. Our proven approach is widely respected for its objectivity and accuracy, while our extensive capabilities enable us to evaluate outcomes thoroughly in relation to structure and process, providing new insights.

**A large, expert organization**
Abt Associates employs more than 1,000 professionals around the world. Our large and diverse staff has broad and deep expertise – and decades of experience – in health outcomes, health economics, clinical care, statistical analysis, meta-analysis, modeling and simulation, and other related areas. We supplement our in-house expertise and capabilities with strong collaborative relationships. Our Boston-area headquarters provides us with ready access to top academic institutions and medical centers, as well as to leading clinical authorities, including practicing physicians. As a result, we can focus a broad base of knowledge and expertise on our clients’ specific challenges.

**A wide range of capabilities**
Healthcare outcomes encompasses a broad spectrum of challenges and issues. Abt Associates responds with a full array of capabilities and strengths, including:
- Cost-effectiveness analysis
- Cost-of-illness studies
- Technology assessment
- Performance profiling
- Quality-of-life and functional and clinical health status measurement
- Clinical quality indicator development
- Guideline and clinical pathway development
- Clinical trial design and analysis
- Disease management program evaluation
- Design and analysis
- Drug/medical claims analytic file construction and analysis
- Epidemiological studies
- Literature review and meta-analysis
- Consumer satisfaction evaluations

**Advanced technology**
Patient safety and outcomes can be directly influenced by health information technology (HIT). Abt is collaborating with health system partners to advance the evidence base for HIT. Studying healthcare outcomes requires expertise with a wide range of data – from hard-copy reports to electronic medical records, from administrative databases to in-person interviews and focus groups. Abt Associates has earned its reputation by gathering and analyzing data from many sources, using our full-service, in-house survey design and implementation capabilities.

We also have extensive expertise in designing unique data collection strategies, collecting data and designing databases, creating control groups, recruiting and retaining specific disease populations, working with public and private healthcare data sources, and linking primary and secondary data. Our capabilities include creating linked databases of healthcare claims with medical abstracted data and other clinical and drug data to present a full picture of treatment and outcomes.

**Studying outcomes within diverse populations**
Abt Associates specializes in reaching and surveying diverse populations. We gather outcomes data from mobile groups, people with chronic disabilities, HIV-positive populations, children with special healthcare needs, Medicare beneficiaries, Medicaid recipients, and people from a wide range of ethnicities and

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Learning from patient outcomes

Abt Associates provides more than health outcomes data. We help our clients use this information to achieve real results and policy improvements. Careful measurement of health outcomes lets our clients make changes in processes, policies, or procedures that can make a real difference to patient outcomes, patient safety, and cost effectiveness in treatment decision making.

A sample of our work in health outcomes and patient safety follows. Visit www.abtassociates.com for detailed project descriptions and to explore the full range of our capabilities.

• Quality indicators (QIs)
   Abt Associates and partners have been involved with QI development, validation, risk adjustment and analysis, and reporting for the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) as well as for states across various providers:

   Nursing homes: Abt Associates developed the QIs for nursing facilities, validated the QIs through direct-care observation across a large, multi-state sample, and worked with states and CMS in public reporting. The culmination of these efforts was the selection of the quality measures that are currently publicly reported for all Medicare- and Medicaid-certified nursing homes.

   Home health: We are developing new home healthcare measures in anticipation of federal pay-for-performance initiatives and assessing how consumers, clinicians, and discharge planners use nursing home and home health QIs to select post-acute providers.

   Hospitals and health plans: Abt Associates has worked with state organizations and is working with CMS to assess the best way to display hospital and health plan QIs to support consumer choice. We also supported the development of hospital nursing sensitive measures and helped design the pilot initiative for public reporting.

• Conducting research aimed at reducing falls among the elderly

Projects focused on reducing falls among the elderly have involved conducting a comprehensive review of the fall-related literature and convening a national panel of experts to assist with determining the optimal mix of fall-prevention strategies. Our ongoing work uses a multi-tiered, random, experimental research design for studying the effects of reducing the incidence of falls on long-term-care expenses.

• Adding clinical data to administrative

Abt Associates identified the most efficient set of clinical data elements that can be added to administrative data to increase the reliability and validity of hospital-specific, public, quality reporting of the AHRQ inpatient-quality and patient-safety indicators.

• Preparing for disaster response

Abt Associates has broad experience with natural, manmade, and terrorist disaster response planning – a critical element of patient safety – including operation planning for reopening shuttered hospitals during a large-scale emergency and developing Web-based tools for tracking mass patient and evacuee movement and estimating medical resources.

For more information on Abt Associates and our work in health outcomes and patient safety, contact:
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