Health Policy Research and Improving Healthcare Quality

Abt Associates’ innovative interdisciplinary team combines expertise in health services, economics, clinical care, statistics, research methods and implementation science to deliver leading-edge support for health services.

Highlighted Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Work

ONCOLOGY CARE MODEL (OCM)
Client: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
OCM is designed to incentivize better care coordination and to improve access to both practitioners and evidence-based cancer treatment for Medicare beneficiaries. Abt is conducting a mixed methods evaluation of OCM’s impact on all-cause mortality, quality of end-of-life care, medication management, disparities in cancer care, impacts of other payer participation and unintended consequences. Abt researchers integrate data from Medicare administrative data, case studies and surveys of patients, clinicians and practice leaders to provide CMS with both rapid-cycle and comprehensive annual reporting.

MEDICAID INNOVATOR ACCELERATOR PROGRAM (IAP) EVALUATION
Client: CMS
The Medicaid IAP supports state Medicaid agencies through technical assistance and capacity building to meet the needs of Medicaid beneficiaries with complex health needs—such as comorbid physical and mental health conditions—and those needing community-based, long-term services and supports. Abt is conducting a rapid-cycle qualitative evaluation of the participating states’ experiences with the technical assistance and capacity building in IAP via interviews, focus groups and observations of group-learning activities.

MEDICARE CARE CHOICES MODEL (MCCM)
Client: CMS
MCCM gives Medicare beneficiaries with certain advanced diseases the option to receive palliative care from a participating hospice while maintaining coverage for curative treatments. Abt’s evaluation is determining whether offering services to improve quality of life and quality of care increases patient and caregiver satisfaction and transitions to hospice and reduces Medicare expenditures.

Selected Expertise

RESEARCH, MONITORING AND EVALUATION
• Randomized experiments
• Quasi-experimental designs
• Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION
• Program implementation support (including quality measurement)
• Public reporting support
• Provider training
• Federal rulemaking support
• Technical assistance
Highlighted Technical Assistance and Implementation Work

HOME HEALTH AND HOSPICE QUALITY MEASURE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE
Client: CMS
Abt researchers are collaborating with CMS to develop measures to help patients and their families find high quality home health and hospice care. These quality measures are publicly reported on the Home Health and Hospice Compare sites, including the Quality of Patient Care Star Ratings calculated by Abt to facilitate comparison of home health agencies. Abt clinicians also provide training and question and answer support to home health and hospice providers.

NURSING HOME COMPARE
Client: CMS
For more than a decade, Abt has worked closely with CMS to develop, implement, refine and support the nationwide Five-Star Quality Rating System for nursing homes, which are displayed on the Nursing Home Compare website. Ratings for each nursing home are based on annual health inspection survey results, staffing ratios and a set of assessment and claims-based quality measures. Abt calculates the nursing home ratings, generates more than 15,000 individualized provider preview reports each month and operates a Helpline for provider inquiries.

HOME HEALTH PROSPECTIVE PAYMENT SYSTEM (HH PPS) AND HOSPICE ANALYSIS SUPPORT AND MONITORING
Client: CMS
Abt provides technical support and payment analyses for the development, implementation and monitoring of payment reform options for Medicare’s current HH PPS and the Medicare Hospice Benefit. Abt staff support CMS in federal rulemaking associated payment systems changes and recently helped CMS develop a new benefit for Home Infusion Therapy.

HOME HEALTH VALUE-BASED PURCHASING IMPLEMENTATION AND HOME HEALTH VALUE-BASED PURCHASING TECHNICAL SUPPORT
Client: CMS
Abt partners with CMS to support the implementation of the Home Health Value-Based Purchasing model. Abt calculates quality measure scores and payment adjustments, reports these results to CMS and to home health agencies (HHAs) and conducts overall monitoring of the model. Another Abt team supports HHAs with timely training and the technical assistance necessary to: 1) understand the model, 2) drive sustainable quality improvement in home health care and 3) achieve success in improving quality and receiving incentive payments.

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