

NQF Partners With AMA to Improve Diagnostic Quality and Reduce Errors by Standardizing Patient Symptom Data

Initiative tests new approach for engaging clinicians in creating interoperable symptom data standards to improve diagnostic quality and patient care

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, February 21, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The National Quality Forum (NQF) is

working with the American Medical

Association (AMA) to initiate standards for collecting and sharing patient symptom data in clinical care, a crucial step toward improving the diagnostic process and reducing diagnostic errors, leading to better, safer care.



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Elizabeth Drye, MD, SM, Chief Scientific Officer, NQF

Technical standards for storing and communicating health data are essential to record information that is accurate, unambiguous, and readily available to inform treatment decisions and to measure and report on quality of care.

Developing standards with early input from clinicians is needed to ensure the data are useful and actionable in real-world care settings. NQF will test a new approach for engaging clinicians in developing standards, with AMA helping to recruit physicians to participate in the effort.

Despite being a critical input to the diagnostic process, symptom data are not consistently recorded or defined in Electronic Health Record (EHR) systems, impeding clinicians’ access to information they need to provide accurate, timely diagnoses. Diagnostic error is a persistent contributing factor in patient harm events. A recent study from the Johns Hopkins Armstrong Institute Center for Diagnostic Excellence estimates that about 795,000 people are seriously harmed or die each year as a result of incorrect or delayed diagnosis.

“Patients place a great deal of trust in doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals, who

rely on the information patients provide about their conditions, health history, and symptoms,” said Elizabeth Drye, MD, SM, Chief Scientific Officer, NQF. “They want the clinicians who care for them to be equipped with the right information at the right time to make the best diagnoses possible. For patient safety and to improve the care experience, it is vitally important to develop consensus on symptom data standards with input from clinicians who rely on these data to improve diagnosis and care.”

As a first step to engage clinicians, NQF is working with the AMA to engage a wide array of physicians early in the standards development life cycle to identify key terms and characteristics that support sharing of symptom data, and then initiate standardization through the HL7 (Health Level 7) consensus process. HL7 is a set of global standards for exchanging medical information that allow healthcare systems to communicate with one another. This work implements a key recommendation from the National Academy of Medicine’s 2015 report on improving diagnosis to advance data standards, including those for symptoms, working with physicians, to better support diagnosis.

In the first 12 months, NQF will identify diagnostic excellence strategies, or “use cases,” for which enhanced symptom data is critical, and then convene medical specialties through expert clinician meetings to elicit input and develop consensus surrounding key terms and characteristics of data that support sharing of patient symptoms. In the following 18 months, NQF will bring the key symptom data standards recommendations defined by clinicians through HL7’s standards development process, to develop and refine interoperability artifacts in support of the use cases that will lead to enhanced adoption of sharing patient symptoms data. This work is supported by funding from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

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About National Quality Forum

The National Quality Forum (NQF) is a not-for-profit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization that works to improve healthcare outcomes, safety, equity, and affordability. Our unique role is to bring all voices to our table to forge multistakeholder consensus on quality measurement and improvement standards and practices that achieve measurable health improvements for all. NQF is a proud affiliate of The Joint Commission. Learn more at www.qualityforum.org.

About the American Medical Association

The American Medical Association is the physicians’ powerful ally in patient care. As the only medical association that convenes 190+ state and specialty medical societies and other critical stakeholders, the AMA represents physicians with a unified voice to all key players in health care. The AMA leverages its strength by removing the obstacles that interfere with patient care, leading the charge to prevent chronic disease and confront public health crises and driving the future of medicine to tackle the biggest challenges in health care.

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