Perspectives on the Quality of Care

Patient Perspective

From the patient perspective, quality of care may be defined as a good treatment outcome or a quick recovery time. However, the large number of medical errors committed each year have marred the reputation of the health care industry and contributed to questions surrounding the overall quality of care. In fact, according to the landmark study on medical errors conducted by the Institute of Medicine, between 44,000–98,000 medical errors are committed annually (Institute of Medicine, 1999).

Provider Perspective

From a provider perspective, the quality of medical care may also be a weakness because it is so difficult to define and measure. For example, many providers view quality care in terms of treatment outcomes and the appropriateness of care. However, not all treatments work for all patients, and some might take longer to work than others. This may be in direct conflict with the patient’s definition of quality care, thus leading to a general dissatisfaction because not all parties are satisfied.

Administrator Perspective

From an administrator’s perspective, quality is a nebulous concept. When administrators think in terms of quality, they may view it as efficiently providing care while still having the ability to turn a profit. For example, if too many unnecessary tests are being ordered by their providers, the profit margins might decrease. However, patients might be happy with such thorough testing. The key for the administrator is to try and educate providers on striking the balance between too much and not enough testing and using testing both appropriately and only when necessary.

Third-Party Payer Perspective

Third-party payers may be concerned with quality from more of a business standpoint. They have to not only satisfy their subscribers (i.e., the patients) but the providers as well. To do this, they must also strive to deliver the delicate balance of encouraging and allowing providers to provide the care necessary while operating efficiently.

The government is also concerned with quality of care and struggles with defining it. From the standpoint of the government, they seek to regulate a health care industry that provides efficient and effective care. The government
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has to contend with all of the stakeholder perspectives on what defines quality and try to meld all of the definitions together to achieve maximum satisfaction.

Reference