

# From the desk of Michael T. Rapp, MD, JD, FACEP

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## New Options for the 2008 Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI)

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently announced new options for the 2008 Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) program that make it easier than ever to participate.

PQRI is a voluntary quality reporting system that was initially authorized by the 2006 Tax Relief and Health Care Act, in which eligible professionals who satisfactorily report on the quality of services furnished will receive a financial incentive. For 2008, there are 2 alternative reporting periods—January 1–December 31, 2008, or July 1–December 31, 2008. Healthcare professionals across a wide spectrum are eligible to participate in this program, including physicians, nonphysician practitioners, and therapists. Many professionals are already working to improve the quality of care to beneficiaries through their hospitals and institutions or through their continuing commitment to competence in their specialty.

### Why Should Healthcare Professionals Be Interested?

PQRI enables participants to choose specific quality measures to report—measures that pertain to the care they actually deliver in their practices. Those professionals who submit quality data for either of the 2008 reporting periods will receive a confidential report that informs them of their performance relative to other professionals.

The PQRI program uses measures that have been endorsed by the National Quality Forum (NQF) or approved by the AQA (formerly known as the Ambulatory Care Quality Alliance), which use a structured process for the review of measures that includes participation by professional

societies and national quality associations. Measures endorsed by the NQF and approved by AQA are considered reliable and meaningful indicators of quality care.

As further incentive to participate in 2008, participating eligible professionals who meet CMS' criteria for satisfactory reporting of quality data will receive an extra 1.5% bonus payment, based on their total allowable charges under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule.

### What Has Changed since the Start of the PQRI Program Last Year?

In 2008, PQRI reporting is based on 119 unique quality measures, including 2 structural measures. The structural measures focus on whether a professional uses electronic health records (EHRs) or electronic prescribing technology. These measures may be reported by any eligible professional on any Medicare patient, regardless of whether any other 2008 PQRI measures apply to the services furnished by that professional. Our Web site, [www.cms.hhs.gov/PQRI](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PQRI), contains more information about each of these measures.

Furthermore, in 2008, a new PQRI law now allows CMS to offer:

- New reporting approaches that give eligible professionals more options to successfully participate, including the choice to report individual measures or measures groups (which combine quality measures applicable to clinical conditions common among Medicare beneficiaries)
- New, alternate reporting periods to allow eligible professionals to begin reporting on July 1,

2008, and still receive an incentive payment (1.5% of allowable charges for services provided from July 1 through December 31, 2008).

- New options to submit quality measures data to CMS through a qualified, established clinical registry, in which eligible professionals may already be participating. CMS expects to post a list of approved registries to its Web site in late summer of 2008.

For more information about PQRI, including 2008 program changes and how to participate, visit us on the CMS Web site at [www.cms.hhs.gov/PQRI](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PQRI). *MPM*

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