



Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Advancing Excellence in Health Care



The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ's) mission is to improve the quality, safety, efficiency, effectiveness, and cost-effectiveness of health care for all Americans. AHRQ works to fulfill its mission by conducting and supporting health services research, both within AHRQ as well as in leading academic institutions, hospitals, physicians' offices, health care systems, and many other settings across the country. The Agency has a broad research portfolio that touches on nearly every aspect of health care. AHRQ pursues its mission through six research portfolios:

- **Patient-Centered Health Research:** improves health care quality by providing patients and physicians with state-of-the-science information on which medical treatments work best for a given condition.
- **Prevention/Care Management Research:** focuses on improving the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of the delivery of evidence-based preventive services and chronic care management in ambulatory care settings.
- **Value Research:** focuses on finding a way to achieve greater value in health care—reducing unnecessary costs and waste while maintaining or improving quality.
- **Health Information Technology:** develops and disseminates evidence and evidence-based tools to inform policy and practice on how health IT can improve the quality of American health care.
- **Patient Safety:** identifies risks and hazards that lead to medical errors and finding ways to prevent patient injury associated with delivery of health care.
- **Crosscutting Activities Related to Quality, Effectiveness, and Efficiency:** includes investigator-initiated and targeted research grants and contracts that focus on health services research in the areas of quality, effectiveness, and efficiency. Crosscutting Activities also includes additional research activities that support all of our research portfolios including data collection, measurement, dissemination and translation, and program evaluation.

AHRQ is the lead patient safety agency within the Department of Health and Human Services. AHRQ develops knowledge and tools to help clinicians in the field understand what they can do to keep patients safe, and help with practical approaches and support that also address how to do it. The foundation of patient safety knowledge that AHRQ has built over the last 15 years has been a major driver for this national public health effort to make care safer. From 2010-2014, 87,000 lives were saved and \$20 billion in excess costs were avoided thanks to a 17 percent decline in hospital-acquired conditions. The number of lives saved during this 4-year period of progress exceeds the number of deaths from breast cancer nationally every 2 years.

In addition to leading the charge on improving patient safety, AHRQ's other platform areas have seen improvements as well:

- AHRQ's Comparative Effectiveness Portfolio has provided essential comparisons of drugs, medical devices, tests, surgeries, or ways to deliver health care so that patients and their families understand what treatments work best and how their risks compare.
- AHRQ's Health IT Portfolio has developed and disseminated evidence and evidence-based tools about the impact of health IT on health care quality. The Portfolio has anticipated the future needs of the health care system and supported development of innovative health IT solutions; identified and filled current gaps in knowledge about health IT; and leveraged the capability of health IT to improve the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care.
- AHRQ's Prevention/Care Management Portfolio has improved the delivery of primary care services in order to meet the needs of the American population for high quality, safe, effective, and efficient clinical prevention and chronic disease care.

While AHRQ has seen significant improvement over the past 5 years in the priority areas, there's still work to be done. While the improvement in patient safety is both substantial and unprecedented, 121 instances of harm still occur for every 1,000 discharges from the hospital. AHRQ intends to continue to focus our efforts in this area by building on what AHRQ learned about safety in hospitals and expand knowledge and make practical tools available to improve patient safety in all settings of care. The recently launched TeamSTEPPS for Office-Based Care is tailored for medical offices to help them improve communication, teamwork, and mutual support, building on successful TeamSTEPPS principles for this setting. This tool and others like it reflect AHRQ's ongoing commitment to improve safety everywhere.

Additionally, AHRQ continues to work toward tackling some of the health care system's greatest challenges, including:

- Reducing antibiotic overuse and eliminating health care-associated infections.
- Improving care for people with multiple chronic conditions.
- Incorporating the latest research findings into electronic health records to facilitate clinical decisionmaking.
- Discovering how to better provide opioid addiction treatment services in rural communities.

These focus areas align to the National Quality Strategy and continue to advance progress in achieving the aims of the Strategy: Better Care, Affordable Care, and Healthy People/Healthy Communities.