

The Colorado Quality Report:
Health Plans 2012
Executive Summary



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Colorado Health Matters Quality Reports – helping Coloradans make informed choices

You can't improve what you don't measure. This is the philosophy that motivates the Colorado Business Group on Health (CBGH) to gather information on the quality of health care. 2012 marks the 9th year CBGH has created the *Colorado Health Matters Quality Reports* (Colorado Quality Report). The *Colorado Quality Reports* provide and explain quality information to health care utilizers on physicians, hospitals, and health plans.

The *Colorado Quality Report: Health Plans 2012* is focused on helping you become an informed patient. An informed patient maintains good health and secures the best treatment outcomes for health conditions and diseases. An informed patient seeks information about treatment options and health care providers. Most importantly, an informed patient chooses a health plan that shares information about the quality of care, and cost of treatments and procedures. The *Colorado Quality Report: Health Plans* is a tool that consumers can use to evaluate their health plan options and stay abreast of the issues that are affecting their health care in the changing marketplace.

Creating informed patients is a goal of organizations across Colorado. The goal of the nonprofit, Engaged Public (story on page 4) is to work with health plans, such as the Colorado Choice Health Plan, and Colorado employers, to improve employer benefit design and to provide patients with easy access to materials that explain their treatment options. Patients feel more in control when they have the tools necessary to make good choices about their health care (for example, undergo surgery or pursue other options). Additionally, LiveWell Colorado, has learned that many of us don't realize what a healthy weight is. The LiveWell Colorado Campaign combats obesity through helping Coloradans make the best decisions to maintain a healthy weight and de-stigmatize obesity (story on page 7).

Recent studies have shown that about 30 percent of all health care (\$750 billion in 2009) is wasteful or unnecessary. The informed patient theme for *Colorado Health Matters Quality Report: Health Plans 2012* aims to address these concerns. Experts studying American health care determined that a number of commonly ordered tests, procedures, and medications offer no benefit to the patient. These tests, procedures or medications may not offer better information to the doctor about how to treat the condition; nor did they improve or cure the condition. Not only is money wasted, but some procedures can actually hinder your health. For more information, see pages 9-10.

Tips on researching doctor visits and procedure costs, and negotiating for better prices are featured in *Colorado Quality Report: Health Plan* on pages 28-30.

The price of common health care waste

How can the informed patient find out which health plans help promote health (e.g. cancer screenings and immunizations); help people with health conditions manage their care (e.g. diabetes, heart disease, mental health disorders), and reduce wasteful and often harmful tests? The Colorado Quality Report: Health Plans compares which health plans support the best health for you and your family.

Eliminating waste by reducing services that add no value to the patient is beneficial to all. Admittedly, physicians prescribe according to long-standing habits, fear of malpractice lawsuits, or sometimes because patients demand certain treatments. For example, 15% - 21% of patients, at a cost of \$31 million, are prescribed antibiotics every year for sinus infections (sinusitis), a common complication of cold, hay fever, and respiratory allergies. However, sinus infections almost always occur due to viral infections, not bacterial ones. The same can be said for acute bronchitis (strong cough with or without phlegm). Studies show that 70% - 90% of patients with acute bronchitis are prescribed antibiotics, half of which are broad spectrum antibiotics. However, acute bronchitis is also commonly caused by viral infections.

The problem with prescribing antibiotics for viral infections is that antibiotics do not work against viral infections. Not only is the antibiotic not aiding in resolving the illness, but one in four people who take antibiotics have side effects. Also, overuse of broad spectrum antibiotics makes you more vulnerable to antibiotic-resistant infections and can undermine the future benefit of antibiotics.

The graph demonstrates the percent of people who had a diagnosis of bronchitis and whether an antibiotic was prescribed. A higher score is better and represents the percentage of people who have a diagnosis of sinusitis and who DO NOT get an antibiotic.

The NCQA Benchmark rate uses information from health plans around the country to show what kind of care the better performing health plans can offer to their patients. The average rate in Colorado is 28%, ranking 5% higher than the national average of 23%. The best performing plans are at 30%. That is to say, on average in Colorado, 72% of health plan members could be taking medication that does not treat their condition and could hinder their overall health. A full comparison of Colorado health plans can be found within Colorado Quality Report: Health Plans.

The percentage of health plan members 18 to 64 years of age with a diagnosis of acute bronchitis who were not dispensed an antibiotic prescription

National Average	23%
Colorado Average	28%
NCQA Benchmark	30%

	Overall rating of the health plan
HMO	
Aetna Health Inc.	below
Cigna	better
HMO Colorado Subsidiary of Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield	average
Kaiser Permanente	better
Rocky Mountain HMO	below
PPO	
Aetna Health Inc.	average
Cigna	average
Rocky Mountain PPO	below
UnitedHealthcare of Colorado	average

better Significantly higher than the average of participating Colorado health plans

average Similar to the average of participating Colorado health plans

below Significantly lower than the average of participating Colorado health plans

How do Coloradoans rate their health plans?

Health plans should act as a beneficial and reliable source of information needed for making health care decisions. The Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Survey (CAHPS) is a scientific way of asking patients to rate their experience with their health plan. On average, 57% of Colorado survey respondents rate their health plan as good or very good (a rating of 8 -10 on a 10 point scale). Cigna and Kaiser Permanente continue to lead Colorado health plans in the overall rating of member satisfaction with their health plan. Coloradoans rate their actual health care they receive, not just their health plan, as average across every health plan.

The Health Matters Quality Report has been supported by leading Colorado employers since 1997 to promote better service and quality from health plan partners. Reaching the goal of providing the best health care at an affordable cost leads to a healthier and more productive workforce. The value of Colorado Health Matters Quality Report is to provide a reliable tool that changes the healthcare benefits marketplace. It helps employers and consumers choose high value healthcare programs. By sharing this report with employees and the community at large, we enable the informed patient to help shape the best health care system. We hope you enjoy the full report and look forward to your comments and suggestions.

Who is the Colorado Business Group on Health?

CBGH is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing a voice for health care quality, access, standards and value for purchasers and users of health care. CBGH members include both public and private entities that provide health care benefits to employees; organizations that provide health care services or products; and not-for-profit, mission-oriented associations. Benefits of membership include the ability to collaborate with other Colorado leaders and participate in initiatives that improve health care costs and quality.

To download a full copy of the report, go to www.ColoradoHealthOnline.org

