

# Health Care Quality Watch

MONTHLY NEWS BRIEFS FOR MANAGERS AND OPINION LEADERS

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**IPRO now has free training available for acute-care Prospective Payment System (PPS) hospitals in New York on the new Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) “PEPPER” (Program for Evaluating Payment Patterns Electronic Report) electronic reporting tool.** PEPPER provides summary statistics of administrative claims data on CMS Target Areas (areas likely to have payment errors due to billing, DRG/coding and/or admission necessity issues). Hospitals can use PEPPER to review their data for the current quarters and the previous three fiscal years for each of the areas targeted for improvement by CMS, and compare their performance to that of the other acute-care PPS hospitals within their state. They can also use the tool to compare their own data across years to identify significant changes in billing practices; pinpoint areas in need of auditing; identify potential DRG under- or over-coding problems; and identify target areas where length-of-stay is increasing. Training will be conducted via a combination of Webinar learning sessions and dissemination of print and/or audio-visual materials. General sessions will cover the history, intent, use, navigation, meaning and implications of PEPPER. Advanced Webinar training will focus on more complex

and specific issues and applications of PEPPER. Up to 200 hospitals will be able to participate in each of the sessions. For more information about PEPPER training opportunities, contact Dr. Kathleen Terry at 516-326-7767, extension 226, or visit [www.ipro.org/pepper](http://www.ipro.org/pepper).

**The New York State Wise Antibiotics Information Team, a state-led voluntary effort by clinicians and health professionals across the state, has developed a “Viral Prescription” that it asks practitioners to distribute to their patients.** The document explains how to self-manage a cold, cough, flu, bronchitis, or sore throat, noting that antibiotic treatments don't cure viral infections and can be harmful when not needed. The “Viral Prescription” is available in English and Spanish and can be ordered in quantities by writing to Viral Prescription, Box 2000, Albany, NY 12220. It is available for download at [www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/antibiotic/antibiotic.htm](http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/antibiotic/antibiotic.htm). Exam room posters and bookmarks are also available for practitioners to give their patients. To order any of these materials, email the Team at [abxuse@health.state.ny.us](mailto:abxuse@health.state.ny.us).

**Lois Aronstein of the American Association of Retired Persons and Sister Bernadette Devlin of**

**Catholic Charities have been elected to the IPRO Board of Directors.** Aronstein, an 18-year veteran of AARP, was named Director of that organization's New York State Office when it was established in 1993. She is a member of the Advisory Board of the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs, a trustee of the Aging in New York Fund, and a member of the Board of Trustees of At Home, Inc. Sister Bernadette, a member of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul religious community, began working in the Office for the Aging at Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens in 1978. She currently serves as Program Manager for the Diocesan Senior Clubs in Brooklyn and Queens. Both women have been significant contributors to the success of IPRO's Consumer Advisory Council since its inception. “We are delighted that these two outstanding individuals have agreed to sit on our Board,” said IPRO CEO Ted Will. “They bring so much to the table. IPRO and many of our collaborators and other stakeholders in the New York health care community have already benefited enormously from their expertise and wisdom. Now we will have the privilege of working with Sister Bernadette and Ms. Aronstein more closely.”

**IPRO executive Thomas Hartman was named Vice President, Health Care Quality Improvement, effective July 11th.** Since joining IPRO in January, 2001, Hartman has been involved in a number of quality measurement and improvement activities related to care in hospitals, nursing homes and primary care centers, and led IPRO's Hospital Public Reporting Pilot, an initiative sponsored by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to develop a publicly available hospital performance reporting system. Prior to joining IPRO, Hartman spent four years as Director of Quality Measurement and Performance Improvement for a multi-state health plan. Prior to that, he spent 16 years at the New York State Department of Health. At DOH, he played key roles in the development and implementation of the New York State cardiac surgery reporting system and HMO quality assurance reporting requirements.

**IPRO also has a new Chief Financial Officer. Alan F. King** brings more than 20 years of financial experience in health care settings, 18 as CFO, to his new position. After retiring from the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel, he went to work at Nassau County Medical Center in East Meadow, where he served as Chief Financial Officer. Most recently, he was Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer at Peninsula Hospital Center in Far Rockaway. Alan holds a BS degree from the University of Massachusetts and an MBA from the University of Utah. He is a member of the Healthcare Financial Management Association.

**Medicare just turned 40, and late last month health care providers and other stakeholders from around the metropolitan New York region gathered in IPRO's Lake Success Board Room to mark the occasion.** The July 28th event was part of a national commemoration — conducted via satellite broadcast from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Baltimore headquarters — of CMS's 40th Anniversary. James T. Kerr, Regional Administrator, CMS Regional Office II, joined by Dennis Gonzalez of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, represented CMS in Lake Success. Kerr solicited guests' input on upcoming initiatives, particularly the new Medicare prescription drug benefit, and a lively discussion ensued. The satellite broadcast of the celebration at CMS headquarters followed, and featured remarks by Deputy Administrator Leslie Norwalk and Administrator Dr. Mark McClellan of CMS, and Health and Human Services Secretary Michael O. Leavitt.

**The United Hospital Fund will award \$261,000 in grants to four projects "that seek to improve the quality of care through the adoption and use of health information technology," or HIT.** The eHealth Initiative Foundation, which partners with the UHF on activities designed to foster regional information sharing and build consensus for HIT adoption in New York State, will receive \$75,000 to develop a Web site and establish a leadership/planning committee charged with developing a state-level

policy agenda. The Visiting Nurse Service of New York and the Institute for Urban Family Health will each receive \$75,000 to address HIT interoperability (sharing of clinical information between electronic systems). The Center for Health Information Technology Leadership will receive \$36,000 to fund a project that will measure the financial value of HIT interoperability to health care providers, payers, public health departments, and other stakeholders in New York State. The four HIT-related grants are part of the approximately \$3 million the United Hospital Fund expects to distribute this year "to support promising ideas and projects to improve health care for all New Yorkers." Contact Eleanor Rorer at the UHF for more information: [erorer@uhfnyc.org](mailto:erorer@uhfnyc.org) or 212-494-0732.

*Health Care Quality Watch* is published monthly by IPRO's **Department of Communications & Corporate Development.** IPRO is a not-for-profit organization that works with public and private sector clients to analyze and improve the quality of health care. For further information, contact:

**IPRO**

1979 Marcus Avenue  
Lake Success, NY 11042  
telephone 516-326-7767 ext. 588  
or visit us online at  
**[www.ipro.org](http://www.ipro.org)**