

Making Quality Reality

CH The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia:



“The overall health of children is on the decline.” This is the assessment of Steven M. Altschuler, M.D., president and chief executive officer of The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). Childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions and is a precursor to major illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease. Asthma has become so widespread, it is now the most common reason for emergency department visits by children. Autism, the fastest-growing developmental disability, has a profound impact on affected children — and on their families and schools. ➤

Breathing Quality into Care

At Children's Hospital, asthma is the #1 diagnosis and the #1 reason for inpatient admissions.



Aaron, 12, asthma patient

As a major user of Hospital resources and an enormous societal health issue, asthma care was a logical area of focus for quality improvement.

In early 2005, the Hospital formed the Asthma Quality Initiative Workgroup, a

multidisciplinary team dedicated to developing improved standards of care for asthma patients. Among its efforts, the workgroup makes effective use of the electronic health record, using it to house forms for individual patient care plans and then measure the number of patients for whom plans are actually put in place.

By early 2006, 56 percent of all asthma patients at the Hospital's four Primary Care Centers had asthma care/action plans — a strong tool in effective management of the disease. By end of year, that number is expected to grow to 80 percent. In coming months, the same measurements will be applied to the Hospital's 27 Kids First® Pediatric and Adolescent Practices and its inpatient population.

Making Quality Reality *continued*

Altschuler sees the situation as a call to action for the nation's pediatric providers.

"There is a real need for healthcare professionals to focus on the quality of care, to redesign our systems so we can reverse that downward trend and start improving the healthcare of children again," he says.

One of the leading pediatric hospitals in the nation, Children's Hospital is recognized as a tireless advocate for children's healthcare quality, both within the institution and on the national level. "We're trying to make the notion of measurement and evaluating outcomes and quality part of everything we do in the Hospital," Altschuler says. "It's really core to the way we view our future."

Part of that process is being realized through Children's Hospital's electronic health record, now implemented in 95 percent of its primary care network. "We've made a firm commitment to have an electronic medical record for every child and we will design that record so data can be mined from it — so we can really look at quality, look at outcomes," Altschuler says. While several hospitals are now switching over to electronic records, Children's Hospital is unique in designing its record to work intelligently to pinpoint specific patient information. The record is equipped with an alert system, which tracks information such as immunizations, asthma care/action plans and developmental milestones.

Before the alert system was implemented, 85 percent of CHOP patients in the region surrounding the Hospital were receiving their required immunizations. Now, the number is greater than 95 percent.

The electronic health record is also programmed to pick up clues in patients' records that might make them eligible for specific research studies, helping bring about important advances more quickly. Altschuler cites a recent study within the Division of General Pediatrics: "With no electronic record, just 86 patients were enrolled in the study in 18 months. Using the electronic health record and its notification system, 410 patients were enrolled in 12 months. These are measures that can ultimately benefit all children."

Children's Hospital, deeply invested in promoting quality improvement measures, is collaborating with NICHQ at its Fifth Annual Forum for Improving Children's Health Care. In January, the Hospital partnered with NACHRI (the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions) to host *Medicaid Matters to Children: How Medicaid Can Help Drive Quality Improvement in Pediatrics*. The conference drew attendees from leading pediatric institutions, the insurance industry and government. "That was the first attempt at a very long process to draw national attention to these issues and to ensure that

we are always thinking about quality as we deliver care," says Altschuler.

As the nation's first pediatric hospital, CHOP has a long and rich history of providing exceptional quality care for children. It is no surprise that Children's Hospital continues to light the way ahead. "In the future we will look at genetic data, genetic predispositions, genomics, and see how that might influence outcomes and affect how we provide care,"

Altschuler says. *"We must become fully committed to quality healthcare to improve the lives of children. It is our responsibility. This is just the beginning."*





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