Podcast series: Value-Based Care

Episode 4: The Physical Therapy Outcomes Registry

Welcome to APTA’s podcast series on value-based care, which explains how value is measured in the provision of health care, and describes different aspects of the Quality Payment Program, including the Merit-based Incentive Program, or MIPS, and Advanced Alternative Payment Models, or Advanced APMs. Episode 4 is The Physical Therapy Outcomes Registry. To get the most from this episode, you may want to check out earlier episodes first.

I’m Heather Smith, APTA’s Director of Quality.

As health care shifts from volume to value-based payment models, data is critical to success. APTA’s Physical Therapy Outcomes Registry is a key contributor to that success, but a fair question is, what makes the Physical Therapy Outcomes Registry special? In fact, what is a registry?

A registry captures information about the health status of patients and the health care they receive over time. Registries typically focus on patients who share a common reason for needing health care—the Physical Therapy Outcomes Registry focuses on patients receiving physical therapy services, throughout the lifespan and across all care settings. Registry data will allow PTs to understand their treatment patterns, interventions, and outcomes for specific patient populations. In addition, the data points will help demonstrate the value of physical therapist services.

How does the registry work? PTs continue to document key components of the patient’s visits in their electronic medical record. The clinical data is sent from the medical record to the registry. The registry takes the clinical data and creates feedback reports for providers.

In everyday practice, then, PTs use the information objectively to evaluate how a patient, a group of patients, or a population of patients are cared for. The reports provide a standardized way to identify areas of improvement in efficiency, outcomes, and safety of the care you provide to your patients. The information collected and reported is recognized by other health care providers and the public, enabling the profession to communicate areas of success. The information is consistently evaluated and validated through a peer-reviewed process that ensures transparency and acceptability.

For example, the use of evidence-based clinical practice guidelines, or CPGs, can be evaluated by asking, “Are patients receiving recommended treatment(s)?” The Registry will collect information from your documentation and generate reports on not only your performance in following the CPG recommendations but also the outcomes of that single patient, of all your patients, of all the patients that are treated in your facility or organization, and all patients with a similar health condition across the nation.
As health care shifts to value-based payment, Registry information will be used increasingly to ensure that payment for physical therapist services is adjusted based on the quality of care provided. Finally, the information from the Registry can assist PT or PTAs in professional growth. One example is using a report about the types of patients that you see as part of certification or recertification for specialization.

Can electronic health records do any of this? The Registry will allow much broader and more specific data collection than any one EHR product. The Registry will enable PTs to follow patients across multiple settings and better coordinate care in episodic models. PTs will be able to better understand what an episode of care looks like from the patient perspective. And by collecting physical therapy-specific data in a standardized manner across all settings, we can identify which practices can be used across multiple settings. This will allow the profession to develop physical therapy quality measures. Finally, by better understanding the impact of physical therapist services across the care continuum, we will increase opportunities to demonstrate how physical therapy is a key part of care for specific patient populations. This is important as health care increasingly focuses on patient-centered care, and the same quality measures now used for payers eventually become available for patients to use in making more-informed decisions about their care.

Additionally, the registry enables providers to better identify the factors that might have an impact on outcomes, such as comorbidities, social factors, and compliance. This information will be used to develop risk adjustments for our quality measures—in other words, to account for differences in the underlying health statuses of patients so that patients with different risk factors can be compared more accurately on a measure. This is especially critical as quality measures are being tied to payment.

What role will the Registry play in the future? As the Registry grows, there will be additional opportunities for formal research, including looking at comparative effectiveness. Registry data will also inform our clinical practice guidelines and allow the profession to elevate practice through the use of data.

If you are interested in getting more information on participation in the Registry, visit the Registry website at www.ptoutcomes.com.

This has been Episode 4 of the podcast series on value-based care. To find all episodes of this series, go to www.apta.org/MACRA/. You also can find these and all APTA podcasts on iTunes by searching APTA Podcasts or by going to www.apta.org/Podcasts. Thanks for listening.

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