Recent Statistics Related to Quality of Health Care in America

Medical Errors

- Between 48,000 and 98,000 people die each year in hospitals from preventable medical errors. One million more are injured. [1]
  Medical errors kill more people per year than breast cancer, AIDS or motor vehicle accidents. [2]
- Medical errors have been cited as the nation's fourth leading cause of death according to the National Academy for State Health Policy. [3]
- The National Academy of State Health Policy reports that 106 medical-error related bills have been introduced in state legislatures since 1999 and legislation to address medical errors has been introduced in 26 states. [4]
- Forty-two percent of Americans report that they have been personally involved in a situation where a preventable medical error was made in their own care or that of a family member. [5]
- Thirty-five percent of physicians report that they have been personally involved in a situation where a preventable medical error was made in their own care or that of a family member. [5]
- Seventy-three percent of the public said that the government should require health care providers to report all serious medical errors; while 21 percent said reporting should be done on a voluntary basis. [6]
- Eighty-four percent of the public thinks that increasing efforts to reduce medical errors should be a very important priority for the nation's health agenda. [7]

Providing Appropriate Care

- Doctors provide appropriate preventive care only 50 percent of the time, effective chronic care 60 percent of the time, and evidence-based acute care only 70 percent of the time. [8]
- Eighteen thousand Americans die each year from heart attacks because they didn't receive preventive medications, although they were eligible for them. [9]

- More than 50 percent of patients with diabetes, hypertension, tobacco addiction, hyperlipidemia, congestive heart failure, asthma, depression and chronic atrial fibrillation are currently managed inadequately. [10]
- The lag between the discovery of more effective forms of treatment and their incorporation into routine patient care averages 17 years. [11]

Financial Implications of Poor Quality of Health Care

- Nearly $400 billion -- almost one-third of the total spent on health care each year -- is wasted on poor quality health care. [12]
- Preventable medical errors drive up health care costs by as much as $29 billion annually. [13]
- Medication-related errors for hospitalized patients cost roughly $2 billion annually. [14]
- Nearly 66.5 million avoidable sick days and more than $1.8 billion in excess medical costs can be traced to the health care system's routine failure to provide needed care. [15]

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