

Health Care Quality Data: A Summer Intern Gains Project Experience

In May 2012 I started my internship under the guidance of Dr. David Nash at the Jefferson School of Population Health (JSPH). I knew that this would be a great experience but I had no idea how much I would learn so quickly. I have assisted on many research projects but there is one in particular that has been influential on my time here. This article focuses on the project and the benefits that I have reaped from participating in it.

Faculty and staff at the School of Population Health have partnered with the California HealthCare Foundation on a research project focused on the use of clinical registries for public reporting of health care quality data. The project has two objectives: 1) conduct an environmental scan across the US and several foreign countries to identify innovative registries; 2) narrow the research to include four main areas of registries, including cardiology, cancer, maternity, and hip/knee replacement. We are using a “positive deviance” approach in which we are defining and learning from high performing registries.

Clinical registries have traditionally been used to

conduct surveillance, but more recently have also been used for quality improvement purposes. This project focuses on expanding the use of existing registries in order to assist patients in decision-making regarding providers and treatment options based on performance data. Initially, we conducted an environmental scan of existing registries in order to identify high performing registries for the purposes of public reporting. We engaged a consulting panel of experts in registry design to help guide our search and confirm our findings. Currently, we are interviewing key informants from each of the “positive deviant” registries in order to learn from their experience developing and maintaining registries.

At the end of the project there will be three deliverables. The first will be a Final Report to the California HealthCare Foundation. The second will be an Issue Brief that will be useful to policy makers and consumer advocacy organizations. The final deliverable will be a manuscript for publication that focuses on a particular clinical area; the audience for which will include healthcare providers and health policy researchers.

I have been working with very talented people on this project including Tamar Klaiman, PhD, MPH, Assistant Professor. When I asked her about the potential impact of the project she noted that, “This project will help to inform the California HealthCare Foundation’s future work in this area. Utilizing existing data to help inform patient choice is a promising area and can help improve quality of care in key clinical areas.” As an intern I have learned a great deal from every person on this project. In my undergraduate career I have had to write a number of research papers but until now I never understood how to differentiate which sources were important and which ones could be left behind. I also am learning to work in a group setting. Each member on this team has a specific role that complements the others. Working with such accomplished people has made me decide to further my education in public health once I complete my bachelor’s degree in Health Policy Administration from Penn State University in the fall. ■

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