

## Promoting Improved Patient Care with CMS' ESRD Quality Incentive Program

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Did you know that, as part of its overall goal to emphasize the needs of Medicare beneficiaries, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has begun a quality improvement program that measures how well dialysis facilities provide care? This initiative, known as the End Stage Renal Disease Quality Incentive Program (ESRD QIP), was created by Congress in a law called the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008.<sup>1</sup> The ESRD QIP is designed to encourage facilities to improve the care provided to patients that have ESRD, and to help improve Medicare's ESRD program in general, by paying dialysis facilities based on the quality of care that they deliver. CMS calculates the quality of care provided by a facility by looking at the facility's performance on multiple quality measures. As part of their day-to-day operation, facilities record treatment data (on Medicare claims for payment and in an electronic data collection system known as "CROWNWeb"), and the ESRD QIP uses that data when evaluating facility performance. If a facility fails to meet certain performance standards, they may receive a lower QIP Performance Score, which means lower payments for the facility. Thus, it is important that you are aware of the benefits of the ESRD QIP and understand:

- What an ESRD QIP Performance Score means to you as a dialysis patient,
- Whether the ESRD QIP Performance Score paints a complete picture of the quality of care provided by a facility, and
- How you can view a facility's ESRD QIP results to assist you in making decisions about your care.

### What is the ESRD QIP?

The ESRD QIP uses treatment data to score facilities based on their performance. If a dialysis facility's Total Performance Score is high enough, the facility will receive 100% of its Medicare payment for treatments provided during the following year. If a dialysis facility's Total Performance Score does not meet minimum benchmarks, then CMS will reduce payment for services provided during the following year according to a sliding scale, with a maximum reduction of 2%.

In order to continually improve the ESRD QIP, CMS works with doctors and other medical professionals each year to find new ways to measure the quality of care provided by dialysis facilities. CMS also

welcomes patient feedback regarding the agency’s proposed rule (the changes proposed to the ESRD QIP for the next year). Each June, CMS publishes the proposed rule in what is known as the Federal Register (<https://www.federalregister.gov>). The public (including patients and patient advocates) has 60 days from the published date to provide comments to CMS regarding the proposed rule, and CMS reviews the public feedback to help develop a final rule for the ESRD QIP.

### **What Does the ESRD QIP Measure?**

The ESRD QIP performance measures change from year to year. During the last measurement period, the ESRD QIP addressed the following measurement topics :<sup>1</sup>

- Anemia management
- Dialysis adequacy
- Infections

Patient experience of care: Anemia Management and Dialysis Adequacy are examples of clinical quality measures on which facilities’ performance is graded. For infection control, facilities are scored on whether they report infections to the federal infection surveillance program, not on the infection rate. Similarly, for patient experience, facilities are scored on whether they administer surveys, not on the survey results.

### **What Does the ESRD QIP Mean to Patients?**

CMS publicly reports the ESRD QIP performance of dialysis facilities in three ways:

1

•CMS provides a two-page Performance Score Certificate (PSC) in English and in Spanish to each facility to post. The document explains a facility’s performance for the year, and the facility must “prominently display” both versions “in patient areas” for the entire following year.

2

•CMS posts ESRD QIP information on Dialysis Facility Compare (DFC), a CMS web-based resource where you can obtain details regarding the services offered by individual dialysis facilities.  
(<http://www.medicare.gov/DialysisFacilityCompare/search.html>)

3

•CMS shares detailed facility information each year in an online file entitled “ESRD QIP Dialysis Facility Performance Information.”  
(<https://data.medicare.gov/data/dialysis-facility-compare>)

The Performance Score Certificate shows how well a facility performed on each measure. You can use the information on the Performance Score Certificate to better understand the quality of your facility's dialysis care, and enable you to discuss the data provided on this certificate with your clinic's physicians and other medical staff, if needed. Patients, their families, and their caregivers also can use the Dialysis Facility Compare website to view the information that appears on the Performance Score Certificate, and to obtain other facility details.

You can review a sample Performance Score Certificate for educational purposes at <http://www.dialysisreports.org/pdf/esrd/public/PY2014PSCSample.pdf>.

### **Does the ESRD QIP Give a Complete Analysis of a Dialysis Facility?**

Although the ESRD QIP provides important information that you can use to compare a facility's performance in specific areas against other facilities in the area, state, and nation, it does not give a comprehensive analysis of a dialysis facility. For example, the ESRD QIP does not currently measure factors such as patients' emotional well-being, nutrition, and other issues that are important to patients. The performance measures used in the ESRD QIP cannot show every aspect of the care provided by a facility.

To determine whether a dialysis facility might best meet your individual needs, you should consider the information provided on the facility's PSC in conjunction with recommendations from your nephrologists, primary care providers, or other patients to obtain a complete picture of the types of services provided by the facility.

The ESRD QIP score is impacted by key data that CMS has identified as critical to quality care, such as the percentage of Medicare patients with a mean hemoglobin value greater than 12 g/dL,<sup>2</sup> and the number of months for which a facility reports erythropoiesis stimulating agent (ESA) dosage (as applicable) and hemoglobin/hematocrit for each Medicare patient.<sup>3</sup> It also provides summary information, such as whether the facility worked with a CMS-approved vendor to survey patients' experience of care.

You can visit [www.dialysisreports.org](http://www.dialysisreports.org) for further details and Final Measure specifications for the ESRD QIP. Click on the ESRD Measures tab on the [www.dialysisreports.org](http://www.dialysisreports.org) website to view the ESRD Quality Measures.

### How Can Patients Access and Use ESRD QIP Results?

To help people who may have (or may develop) ESRD and their caregivers with making educated decisions regarding treatment options, CMS developed and launched Dialysis Facility Compare (available at [www.medicare.gov/dialysisfacilitycompare](http://www.medicare.gov/dialysisfacilitycompare)) in 2001 to provide information to the public about facility characteristics and quality measures for Medicare-approved dialysis facilities across the nation. The ESRD QIP is one of many sources of information included on the website.

The website allows users to view graphs and tables that show general information, best treatment practices, and hospitalization and death results for up to three facilities at a time. It also allows users to see where a facility ranks in comparison to national performance data – if the facility performed better than expected, as expected, or worse than expected. Figure 1 provides an example of a graph that could be obtained via DFC.

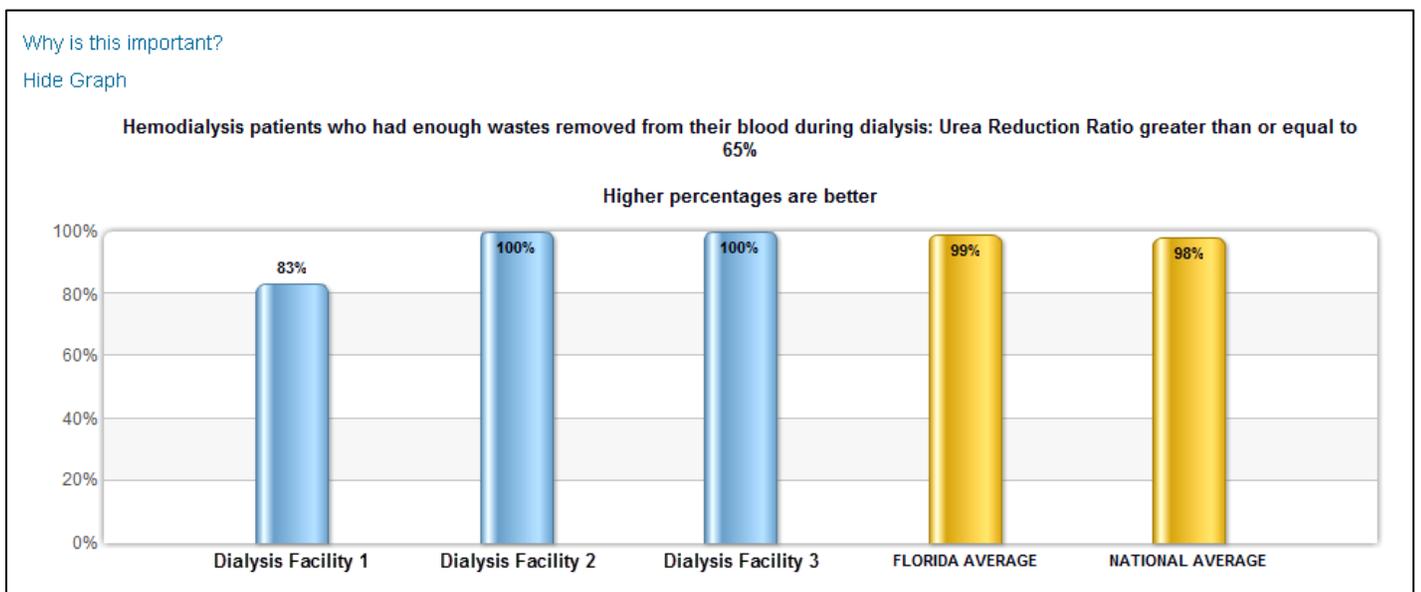


Figure 1: Example of patient care resolves obtainable via CMS's DFC website.

### For more Information

Further information regarding the ESRD QIP can be obtained from <http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/ESRDQIP/index.html>, which provides a wide variety of information including Frequently Asked Questions, detailed discussions about the rules for each payment year, samples of PSCs, and

other helpful references. ESRD QIP technical specifications can be accessed at <http://www.dialysisreports.org/ESRDmeasures.aspx>. Additionally, questions regarding the program can be sent to CMS's ESRD QIP team at [ESRDQIP@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:ESRDQIP@cms.hhs.gov).

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