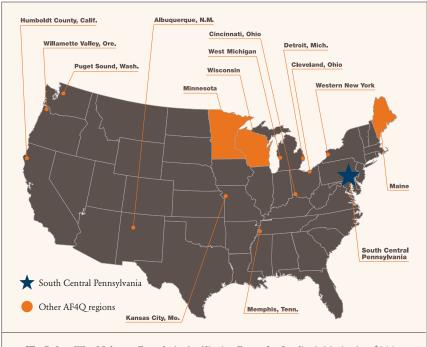
### Aligning Forces for Quality in South Central Pennsylvania A Community Snapshot

South Central Pennsylvania's Adams and York counties are two of the Keystone State's fastest-growing places, with the population of each expected to leap by roughly 25 percent during the next two decades. With Baltimore, Harrisburg, Philadelphia and Washington all nearby, businesses have recognized the region's geographical advantages and located there. Today the area is home to a large motorcycle plant, several major snack food companies and the historic Gettysburg battlefield, a major tourism center.

But even growing regions like South Central Pennsylvania face tough social problems, including serious health care challenges. According to the Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care, three in 10 women there insured by Medicare do not get recommended mammograms to detect breast cancer and the African-American infant mortality rate is almost four times that of whites. In addition, a recent survey found that half of the counties' residents with congestive heart failure have limited knowledge about their own health.

South Central Pennsylvania is hardly alone. These are examples of a broader crisis in the quality of care that the U.S. medical system delivers. The statistics in South Central Pennsylvania are repeated in community after community, endangering the health of millions. And it is not just the failure to deliver care that contributes to the quality problem. Delivering care that harms people—or delivering care that people do not need—is adding billions of dollars to the national health care bill and is one reason why so many Americans cannot afford health insurance.



The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Aligning Forces for Quality initiative is a \$300-million commitment of resources, expertise and training to turn proven health care reforms into real results in South Central Pennsylvania and 14 other regions across the country.

While the health care crisis is national, care is delivered locally. That is why the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is investing \$300 million in promising efforts to improve local health systems in South Central Pennsylvania and 14 other regions across the nation. Called Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q), the initiative brings an unprecedented commitment of resources, expertise and training to turn proven health care reforms into real results at the community level. The AF4Q initiative focuses on the full continuum of health care deliverythe care provided in doctors' offices, clinics and hospitals, and the support provided in the community. It also emphasizes reducing racial and ethnic disparities in care and strengthening nursing's role in improving quality. It advances three interrelated reforms that experts believe are essential to improving health care quality:

- Performance measurement and public reporting: using common standards to measure the quality of patient care and publicly disclosing that performance information.
- **Consumer engagement:** educating patients about their local health care systems to encourage them to demand higher-quality care and help them take a more active role in their own health.
- **Quality improvement:** implementing techniques and protocols that let doctors and hospitals raise the quality of care they deliver to patients.

This snapshot describes how the AF4Q initiative is being implemented in South Central Pennsylvania and the progress being made on these three main fronts.

# How AF4Q is Being Implemented in South Central Pennsylvania

In 2007, RWJF selected the Healthy York County

Coalition (HYCC), a nonprofit community health care collaborative, to implement the AF4Q effort in South Central Pennsylvania. Created in 1994 and comprised of nearly two dozen groups, the coalition enlists business, civic, health care and local government leaders in a common effort to improve health and the quality of life in the region. Its AF4Q initiative, Aligning Forces for Quality South Central Pennsylvania (AF4Q SCPA), is led by a 40-member board representing regional employers and health care consumers, payers, practitioners and providers. WellSpan Health, an integrated, nonprofit health system serving Adams and York counties, plays an active role in both HYCC and its AF4Q effort.

HYCC was chosen through a competition to find groups best positioned to make fundamental, cutting-edge changes to their region's health care system. In addition to expertise, technical assistance and training from national experts, RWJF is providing HYCC with more than \$1 million over three years and access to additional grants for specific projects.

## **South Central Pennsylvania Overview**

#### **AF4Q** service region:

• 2 counties: Adams and York

#### **Health system:**

- General hospitals: 1 4
- General hospital beds: 1 771
- Primary care providers (M.D.s):2 252
- Primary care physicians (D.O.s):3 234

**Population:**4 521,828

• White: 93.1%

• African American: 4.5%

• Asian: 1.1%

• Two or more races: 1.0%

• American Indian or Pacific Islander: < 1.0%

• Hispanic: 4.4% (includes all races)

• Under age 18: 23.0%

• Ages 18-64: 63.3%

• Ages 65 and older: 13.7%

Per capita income: 5 \$25,312

**Uninsured (ages 18-64):**6 13.7%

AF4Q SCPA has also drawn the federal government's notice as a promising national model. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently added it to its national network of 25 Chartered Value Exchanges. Membership gives AF4Q SCPA access to technical assistance that will enrich its AF4Q work, plus opportunities to learn from other collaboratives pursuing data-driven quality improvement.

AF4Q SCPA's mission is to improve the quality of care that patients receive. Its specific goals include:

- having more than half of the region's primary care physicians publicly reporting performance data for two targeted chronic conditions (diabetes and coronary artery disease),
- having primary care physicians use those data and consumer feedback to improve their care for patients with chronic diseases,
- developing a Consumer Advocacy Council to raise awareness of the AF4Q project and promote quality improvement,
- creating a task force to improve health literacy in the community, and
- having at least one local hospital participate in a national learning collaborative to support patientcentered care.

#### **Progress on Performance Measurement and Public Reporting**

In most places in the United States, information about health care quality is siloed in a number of sources. The 15 AF4Q teams are forging relationships and breaking down barriers among health care providers, payers and employers to create common systems for collecting and reporting health care performance data.

In addition to collecting and reporting performance data, all AF4Q teams are seeking ways to measure and analyze their community's overall health. These efforts can help them identify public health interventions in tandem with improvements in care in clinical settings.

Since 1994, HYCC and the Healthy Adams County Coalition, a neighboring health care collaborative, have conducted a community health assessment every three to five years. It includes vital statistics as well as data from health, education and law enforcement sources. It also focuses on key reference data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2010 initiative. The two groups also interview local health and human services leaders to gauge their perceptions about the region's current state of health and quality of life. HYCC and Healthy Adams County use the results to guide their current work and identify new opportunities to improve local residents' health.

Performance measurement and reporting is already underway in South Central Pennsylvania. The four main local providers participating in AF4Q SCPA—WellSpan Medical Group, Memorial Hospital Primary Care, Hanover Hospital Primary Care and Family First Health—have been voluntarily collecting data through WellSpan Health's preferred provider organization, South Central Preferred (SCP). SCP's program monitors the providers' adherence to six nationally endorsed indicators of the quality of chronic illness care. Participating physicians receive reports comparing their own performance with that of their peers as well as current guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of their patients' chronic conditions. Many local physician practices are moving from paper to electronic medical records, which could make it easier to produce comparisons of provider performance.

As part of the local AF4Q effort, the four providers have agreed to begin standardizing how they collect and report data for the SCP program. Twice yearly, they will collect six uniform performance measures for the treatment of diabetes and coronary artery disease. In spring 2009, AF4Q SCPA will begin posting physician performance scores at the practice level on its Web site (www.aligning4healthpa.org). AF4Q SCPA partner hospitals will also publicly report performance measures for various inpatient outcomes on their respective Web sites.

#### **Progress on Consumer Engagement**

Groups involved in the AF4Q SCPA initiative already reach out to consumers in many ways. HYCC, for example, relied on input from more than a thousand local residents when it selected quality-of-life indicators for its York Counts series of reports. In a similar vein, WellSpan Health used consumer focus groups, interviews and surveys to help create and then evaluate its Web site's section on its measures of performance and patient satisfaction.

AF4Q SCPA recently surveyed 500 area patients with diabetes, coronary artery disease or heart failure about the effectiveness of physician-patient communications, their understanding of personal health risks, their use of health care quality information and their personal health behaviors. The members of this Consumer Research Panel will be surveyed every four to six months through spring 2011. The November 2007 survey's finding that 43 percent of the respondents have limited health literacy has prompted HYCC's Health Literacy Task Force to focus on consumer engagement.

AF4Q SCPA also has created a Consumer Advocacy Council that includes patients and their family members and leaders from patient-advocacy organizations. By providing feedback on AF4Q activities, it will help AF4Q SCPA identify strategies and tools to help patients manage their own health.

In addition to publishing performance measures, the AF4Q SCPA Web site will include consumer-oriented features including a "Share Your Story" section for people with chronic illnesses and a glossary of health care terms. AF4Q SCPA also publishes a newsletter for consumers and plans to launch a social marketing campaign called "I Can" designed to help patients with chronic illnesses make lifestyle changes and factor performance data into their health care decisions.

#### **Progress on Quality Improvement**

Quality improvement efforts in health care increasingly focus on lifting the performance of entire systems, not just that of individuals. All 15 AF4Q grantees have been asked to consider ways to create a permanent quality improvement resource in their community, for example by identifying or founding an entity or setting up a network to share knowledge and best practices on improving care.

AF4Q SCPA has created a Physician Advisory Council to build on WellSpan's work with the Chronic Care Model, and speed local development of evidence-based standards of care. The council has produced a video for physicians that explains the model and trains health care professionals at the four AF4Q providers to help patients become more active in their care. It is also developing a standard form for use in physician offices to help patients better understand their care instructions. In addition, each AF4Q provider will commit to at least one change within their primary care practices to support the implementation of the patient-centered medical home model of care, which is based on a strong doctor-patient relationship that emphasizes coordinated care over long periods instead of episodic care based on illnesses and patient health complaints.

AF4Q SCPA has also created a Nursing Advisory Council to coordinate and improve follow-up care for patients after they leave hospitals. It is also developing leaflets and self-care materials for patients with diabetes and

coronary artery disease in the hope the tools will become regional standards. AF4Q SCPA is also participating in RWJF's *Transforming Care at the Bedside* nursing collaborative.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Aligning Forces for Quality**

The premise of AF4Q is that these strategies—public reporting and performance measurement, consumer engagement and quality improvement—must be implemented in a coordinated way to lift the overall quality of health care. That is why the overarching goal of both the national AF4Q program and HYCC in South Central Pennsylvania is to bring community stakeholders together to drive change on these three critical fronts to improve health and health care quality.

For more information about AF4Q in South Central Pennsylvania, visit www. aligning4healthpa.org and www.rwjf.org/qualityequality/af4q/communities/york.jsp.

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Research for this report was provided by the Aligning Forces for Quality Evaluation

Team at Penn State University's Center for Health Care and Policy Research, which is studying the AF4Q initiative to gain insights about community-based reform that can guide health care practice and policy. For more information, visit www. hhdev.psu.edu/CHCPR/activities/project\_alignforce.html.

<sup>12005</sup> American Hospital Association Annual Survey of Hospitals (taken from the 2007 HRSA Area Resource File).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>2006 American Medical Association Physician Masterfile (taken from the 2007 HRSA Area Resource File).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>2004 American Osteopathic Association (taken from the 2007 HRSA Area Resource File).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>2007 Population Estimates—U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>2005–2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>2005 Census Small Area Health Insurance Estimates.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>The Chronic Care Model, which promotes aggressive disease prevention and management, was developed by Improving Chronic Illness Care and is supported by RWJF (*www.improvingchroniccare.org*).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>For more information, visit www.rwjf.org/files/publications/other/TCABBrochure041007.pdf.