

Male Speaker:

Good morning again. I'm Chris Haffer, chair of the 2008 Medicare Advantage Quality Measurement and Performance Assessment Training Conference and also the director of the Medicare Health Outcomes Survey Program at CMS.

Welcome to Baltimore. There's lots of see and do all within walking distance of the hotel. And I encourage you to get outside, take a walk around the waterfront and enjoy not only the Harborplace pavilions but Fort McHenry, birthplace of our National Anthem and the historic neighborhood of Fell's Point, a major point of entry for European immigrants in the 19th century, including mine six generations ago, and home today of an eclectic mix of shops, pubs and restaurants. Both of these areas are within a 30-minute walk of the hotel.

Baltimore's also home to the Johns Hopkins Hospital and Medical School, University of Maryland Hospital and Medical School and the nationally renowned R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center, as well as the Sheppard Pratt Behavioral Health System, the centers for Medicare and Medicaid services and a short drive from the National Institutes of Health. Baltimore's truly one of the health care hubs of the nation and a great setting for this conference.

Now I'd like to give you an orientation to the conference book. Each tab of the binder corresponds to a different session, and behind many of the tabs you'll find the slides that correspond with the speaker's presentations today. Behind some of those speaker presentation slides, you'll find additional blow-ups of some of the smaller slides that we thought were harder to see so that it won't be additional slides as part of the presentation, but they're more in terms of zoomed in on the smaller slides to provide better viewing.

Also if you're leaving the conference before it ends, please make sure to complete the yellow evaluation form, which is found in the back of the conference binder. If you're a physician and are seeking continuing medical education credits, you must complete the pink CME form and submit it at the registration desk along with your evaluation form. A certificate of completion indicating the number of CMEs that you're eligible for will be mailed to you four to six weeks after the conference. All other attendees will be able to pick up their certificate at the end of the conference. If you have additional questions about this, please see Vashawn Coeings [spelled phonetically] or Angela Williams from NCQA who are located in the registration area.

Finally, let's quickly review the agenda located at tab one, page three of the conference binder. In planning the conference, my team kept three guiding principles in mind. First, to design it as an educational conference, second to make it meaningful and finally to keep it fun. As you peruse the agenda, you'll notice that today our two morning sessions provide history and context for measurement in Medicare Advantage.

Our luncheon and two afternoon presentations focus on measurement, assessment and improvement in action, both at the National Health System level and well as at the individual organizational level.

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We continue tomorrow with a discussion of what this means at the individual patient level in terms of providing information that empowers consumers to make more informed purchasing decisions. We then learn of cutting edge research that suggests potential next steps for measurement and improvement at the organizational level. Finally our focus is directed back to the National Health System level with an exciting and enlightening discussion of pay for performance and Medicare Advantage.

I think you'll agree that this conference will be educational. As performance, measurement and quality improvement professionals, we believe that we have met our goal of making the conference meaningful. If each of you takes back one actionable idea, one actionable thought, one actionable contact that enables you to do your job better and that you transfer this knowledge into practice. After all, improving the quality of health care is what we're all about. And if you don't leave this conference with new knowledge, information or tools that augment your ability to do this, we failed.

Now I hear you saying to yourself, nothing that's educational or this meaningful could possibly be fun. Well, I don't know about you, but as health policy wonk at this conference, seeing the names O'Kane, Bloch, Clancy and Wollensky [spelled phonetically] all on the same agenda make me as gleeful and giddy as my nieces and nephews were on a recent trip Disney World when they hear the names Aurora, Cinderella, Aladdin and Lightning McQueen.

[laughter]

And if that doesn't put a smile on your face, then the delicious, free food and drink at our meet the experts welcome reception this afternoon will. Did I mention the free food and drink? The reception is sponsored by the Health Services Advisory Group and the National Committee for Quality Assurance and provide you with an opportunity to meet the CMS experts who will be located in the Potomac Room.

You'll have to tell us at the end of tomorrow if we've met our goals. In fact, we're counting on your feedback, so please remember to complete the yellow form.

It's now my pleasure to introduce the president of the National Committee for Quality Assurance, Peggy O'Kane. Peggy is the founding president of NCQA and one of the nation's leading advocates for improving health care quality through measurement, reporting and accountability. NCQA is the foremost accrediting organization for health plans, including HMOs, PPOs and consumer directed plans. NCQA-accredited plans provide coverage and care to more than 80 million Americans. NCQA is the developer and steward of the health care effectiveness data and information set, the nation's most widely used health care measurement tool. Please join me in welcoming Peggy O'Kane.

[applause]

[end of transcript]