

## **James L. Holly, M.D.**

### **James Holly, MD - Measuring Progress in Primary Care**

James (Larry) Holly, MD is founder and chief executive officer of Southeast Texas Medical Associates (SETMA), a multi-specialty practice in Beaumont, TX, and a four-year member of the National Quality Forum. Larry Holly is a primary care physician and leader in the adoption of healthcare information technology. NQF caught up with him recently to discuss the impact that quality measurement has had on clinical practice

**NQF:** How has measurement affected primary care?

**Larry:** In primary care, metrics are part of a GPS to help us know where we are and where to go. If we want to improve, wherever we are, we have to know where we're starting from. Since 2009, SETMA has publicly reported on over 300 quality metrics, by provider name, on its website. We use this information to help develop patients' care plans and to measure our progress in improving delivery of care and patients' outcomes. We also use measurement to inform our patients about relevant standards of care and where their care may need adjustment. A robust electronic medical record (EMR) is essential, as it makes reporting for quality measurement incidental to the delivery of care and enables physicians to spend more time with patients.

**NQF:** Can you share some examples from your practice?

**Larry:** At SETMA, we started using an EMR 19 years ago and quickly saw the potential to expand our goals from documenting patient encounters to using the record to improve how we managed patients' care. In primary care, in particular, the data we collect and report enables us to treat patients in a more integrated way. In the past 10 years, SETMA's efforts have driven reductions in disparities in how health care is provided to patients of different ethnicities and socio-economic status. Among the more than 8,000 diabetes patients SETMA treated over 12 months in 2013 and 2014, for example, the ethnic distribution of patients with controlled diabetes was nearly identical to the ethnic distribution of patients with uncontrolled diabetes. SETMA also has used data to drive an intervention that helped improve outcomes for patients with diabetes who were successfully managing their blood sugar levels but were losing control in the last quarter of the year because of lax diet, exercise, and medication interventions during the holiday season.

**NQF:** What are opportunities on the horizon?

**Larry:** The future will have more metrics and central reporting of de-identified data to look at best practices. I see opportunity for EMRs to be designed intuitively, by physicians, to help achieve a seamless user experience of the technology, make it as easy as possible to follow best practices, and garner excitement in the community about how we can continue to use metrics to improve patient care and outcomes. I also hope that we will be able to develop methods for more quickly updating metrics and adopting changes in medical practice.

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-JAMES (LARRY) HOLLY, MD, CEO, SOUTHEAST TEXAS MEDICAL ASSOCIATES