

FINAL REPORT

SEVENTH ANNUAL HMO RESEARCH NETWORK CONFERENCE PROGRAM:

"CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES IN HMO RESEARCH"

Purpose of this Conference - The HMO Research Network, in collaboration with American Association of Health Plans (AAHP), hosted the seventh annual HMO Research Network National Conference on April 24-25, 2001 in Seattle, Washington. The HMO Research Network is comprised of the major public domain research centers situated in large health maintenance organizations, generally non-profit organizations. This national meeting provides a forum to advance the individual and collective research efforts of these organizations. The purpose of the conference is four-fold: 1) to identify the challenges and opportunities inherent in the conduct of research in health care delivery systems; (2) to disseminate research findings and discuss methodologic issues from studies conducted in HMOs; (3) to stimulate multi-site collaborative research by providing a forum for researchers with common interests to discuss ideas and methodologies; and (4) to contribute to the national research agenda and identify areas in which the Network is uniquely positioned to enhance the quality and effectiveness of health care delivery. Support for this conference fosters collaboration among a set of established and productive research organizations that are able to conduct population-based research in large populations through their collaborative efforts. These collaborative efforts are proving to be a powerful force for addressing urgent issues in health and preventive care.

Organization of this Conference - The Conference was organized with three plenary sessions, three break-out sessions and a working lunch that permitted individuals with congruent interests to meet. In the break-out sessions, there was a scientific track (generally two sessions per break-out) and a research administration track (generally one session per break out). The Conference also served as a vehicle for convening working sessions of major collaborative research projects of the HMO Research Network, including various projects and committees of the NCI-funded HMO Cancer Research Network, the project team for the

AHRQ-funded "Centers for Education and Research in Therapeutics" initiative, the newly-funded consortium participating in AHRQ-sponsored "Accelerating the Cycle of Research through a Network of Integrated Delivery Systems," and a CDC-funded project on end-of-life care for prostate cancer. These working sessions occurred before, during and after the conference. There were 200 attendees at the Conference. Attendance at the plenary presentations and break out sessions was excellent. There was also an interactive poster session followed by a reception which provided an opportunity for new Investigators in the HMO Research Network to get better acquainted with their colleagues. A conference web site was established that served as a vehicle for providing information and registration forms for the Conference, which was both effective and efficient (www.hmoresearchnetwork.org).

Support for the Conference - Financial assistance for this conference was provided from three sources: a conference grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); a conference grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); and registration fees. In previous years, attendees from non-HMO Research Network sites were charged a registration fee, however, this was the first year that all attendees (other than federal funding agency attendees) were asked to pay registration for this conference.

Content of the Conference - The plenary talks were thought-provoking and well received. Dr. Edward Wagner, MD, MPH, of the Group Health Cooperative Sandy MacColl Institute spoke on: "Improving Chronic Illness Care: Are We Doing the Right Research." Dr. Wagner called for new research on a series of key issues: synthesis of evidence across heterogeneous kinds of interventions (as opposed to the conventional form of meta-analysis of a uniform intervention); research on multi-faceted interventions implemented with involvement of busy practitioners; research on new practice roles such as care managers; research on new forms of long-term support for chronic disease self-management; and population-based effectiveness trials that assess the reach and implementation of interventions, not just efficacy. Dr. Joseph Selby, MD, MPH, from the Kaiser Permanente Northern California Division of Research gave a plenary talk on "Translating our Research into HMO Practice." Dr. Selby discussed some of the difficulties in doing research that is translated into practice in HMO research centers, and

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approaches to overcoming these difficulties. Dr. Robert Hiatt, MD, PhD, from the National Cancer Institute, gave a plenary address on Data Privacy, Patient Protection and HMO Research. This talk focused on the emerging issues in protecting patient confidentiality in light of recent legislation and rapid changes in the organization of health care information systems. The need for increased attention to the complex and important issues that are arising was emphasized.

The breakout sessions brought together individuals with different research perspectives and backgrounds to consider cross-cutting issues in conducting research in HMO settings. The topics discussed included: shared decision-making; cost-effectiveness research; research emerging from the Cancer Research Network; geriatric research; innovations in intervention research; screening research and implementation; and methodologic issues in design, analysis and interpretation of data collected in HMO settings. There were also two sessions aimed at research administration interests: managing challenging situations in large studies and making the case for investigator-initiated, public domain research in HMOs. Abstracts for each of these sessions were presented in the Conference program. Copies of the Conference Program are available on request from Michael Von Korff, Associate Director, Center for Health Studies, 1730 Minor Avenue, Seattle WA 98101, or via email at vonkorff.m@ghc.org.

Evaluation of the Conference Program. Qualitative and quantitative feedback was sought through Meeting Evaluation Forms. The feedback was helpful and informative for future conferences. Each plenary, breakout session, event, and the overall conference was rated on a 1-4 scale (1 = poor/not at all worthwhile; 2 = fair/somewhat worthwhile; 3 = good/worthwhile; 4 = excellent/extremely worthwhile). Qualitative feedback elicited ideas and suggestions for future conferences. Several minor adjustments to the meeting format were suggested, which will be taken into account when planning subsequent conferences.

1. The use of discussants after the plenary presentations took away too much time for general discussion. The number of discussants should be reduced, or eliminated entirely.

2. The research administration track needed to have a strong session in each of the three breakout sessions.
3. The interest tables at the Work Lunch may have benefited from a facilitator at each of the tables, and room acoustics more conducive to conversation.

These were viewed as minor problems that could easily be rectified within the context of the existing meeting format.

Quantitative results of key "variables" of interest are shown below:

Area of Assessment	Mean Score
Plenary 1: Improving Chronic Illness Care: Are We Doing the Right Research?	3.4
Plenary 2: Translating Our Research into HMO Practice	3.4
Plenary 3: Data Privacy, Patient Protection & HMO Research	3.2
Concurrent A1: Shared Decision-Making: Challenges in an Era of Rapidly Changing Evidence	3.3
Concurrent A2: Who is the Customer for Effectiveness Research?	2.8
Concurrent A3: Scientific Sessions of the Cancer Research Network	3.5
Concurrent B1: Symposium on Geriatric Research - Challenges and Opportunities for the HMO Research Network	2.8
Concurrent B2: Making the Case for Investigator-Initiated, Public Domain Research in HMOs	3.6
Concurrent B3: Pushing the Envelope in Intervention Research	3.0
Concurrent C1: Screening Research and Implementation in HMOs	3.7
Concurrent C2: Methodologic Issues: Design, Analysis & Interpretation	2.9
Concurrent C3: Managing Challenging Situations in Large Studies	3.5
Relevance of Program Topics	3.3
Suitable Mix of Topics	3.1
Logistics	3.3
Overall Conference Rating	3.2

The consensus of the meeting organizers, and key informants (e.g. HMO Research Network Center Directors), was that the format of the meeting was highly effective, and the theme was well-suited to the work of the HMO Research Network investigators. The organizers of next year's meeting have elected to use this year's meeting format as a prototype.

Dissemination - The Conference is the only setting in which investigators doing research in HMO settings are able to meet to discuss the unique issues in doing research in an HMO setting. The primary vehicle for dissemination of information presented at the Conference is the attendees themselves. A second vehicle for dissemination of information is the Conference Program, which included an abstract for each of the sessions and each of the 38 poster presentations. The Conference Program can be obtained from Dr. Von Korff via mail, and will be made available via the Conference web site in PDF format.

(www.hmoresearchnetwork.org/2001conf.htm). Dr. Hiatt's plenary summarized a number of initiatives on data privacy and patient protection that can be viewed on federal (e.g., NCI, DHHS) web pages. Copies of the Powerpoint Presentations of the other two of the plenary speakers (Wagner and Selby) will also be made available on the Conference Website.