



## 2020 PQA ANNUAL MEETING PRESENTATION SUMMARY

---

### **Pharmacy Quality Alliance (PQA) Annual Meeting**

May 13-15, 2020

Online

The [PQA](#) Annual Meeting, hosted from May 13-15, 2020, attracted health care executives and quality professionals from across PQA's multi-stakeholder membership. The three-day meeting featured many speakers and educational sessions addressing top issues and emerging trends in medication quality, measure development and implementation, care transformation, and technology.

During the opening plenary, PQA CEO Laura Cranston discussed the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on health outcomes, including access to food and drug therapies. She also called for the health care system to incorporate a future-facing mentality in order to develop innovative health care delivery services to address access to care and expand medication therapy management.

In addition, Discern Health Vice President Donna Dugan and colleagues from the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association and TrestleTree, LLC presented "Improving Quality for Rural Communities At-Risk for Opioid Abuse and Addiction: A Panel Discussion with the Rural Carrier Benefit Plan."

### **Improving Quality for Rural Communities At-Risk for Opioid Abuse and Addiction: A Panel Discussion with the Rural Carrier Benefit Plan**

**Speakers: Cameron Deml, Director of Insurance Programs, National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRCLA); Donna Dugan, PhD, MS, Vice President, Discern Health; Ted Borgstadt, CEO and Co-Founder, TrestleTree, LLC**

- Presentation description: Health care organizations serving rural communities face challenges with addressing the opioid crisis and ensuring access to seamless, high quality care. The panel discussed the quality measure landscape and identified actionable strategies, such as member engagement strategies and performance measures that health plans and providers accountable for care can leverage to improve outcomes for rural communities.
- NRCLA represents more than 116,000 rural letter carriers of the Postal Service. The Rural Carrier Benefit Plan (RCBP) is the health plan for NRCLA that serves a disparate, rural population with members ranging from 40 to 90 years old across every zip code in America. Care needs relevant to carriers include back pain, musculoskeletal conditions, and repetitive motion injury (among other chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension). As such, the opioid crisis has been a challenge for RCBP members.
- People at risk for or living with opioid addiction are at increased risk to the impacts of COVID-19. Initial data has shown that total claims volume is down, with about 90% of members having had to cancel regularly scheduled doctor appointments.



- RCBP has partnered with TrestleTree, a behavior change coaching organization, to support its members in managing pain. Ted, Borgstadt, TrestleTree’s CEO described how they established a comprehensive pain management program targeting the most vulnerable members– including those with musculoskeletal conditions or undergoing related surgeries, and those who currently use opioids. TrestleTree coaches use behavior change interventions, which enable a more contextual understanding of patient predisposition for opioid abuse, such as family, culture, finances, and social factors.
- Discern Health provides healthcare quality strategic advising to RCBP. Quality measures drive initiatives that can improve processes and outcomes for patients. Donna Dugan, Vice President at Discern, provided an overview of the quality measures most relevant to addressing the opioid crisis.
- She highlighted three measures that are part of the 2020 Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB) Plan Performance Assessment (PPA) , to which RCBP is held accountable:
  - Use of Opioids from Multiple Providers (HEDIS measure adapted from PQA)
  - Risk of Continued Opioid Use (HEDIS measure adapted from Minnesota Department of Human Services)
  - Use of Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain (HEDIS measure)
- Other relevant measures include those within the PQA Opioid Core Measure Set and those highlighted in the National Quality Forum (NQF) Opioid/Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) Technical Expert Panel (TEP) Scan.
- Looking ahead, for rural letter carriers actively carrying mail, the biggest issues may be around mental health, stress, and wellness. During the COVID-19 pandemic, RCBP is focusing on reconnecting with members, particularly those members managing multiple chronic conditions, to ensure they have access to the care and medications they need in this challenging environment.
- Donna Dugan highlighted that RCBP is looking at data more holistically to understand which chronic diseases are most prevalent, which members may be facing network adequacy challenges or have other social determinants of health needs, and how RCBP and TrestleTree can support members in adhering to medications, managing their chronic conditions, and keeping themselves well.