Care Pathways Offer an Opportunity to Improve Care Through Evidence-Based Practices

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Summary

Care pathways can help providers make evidence-based decisions about where to focus care improvement efforts.

In an environment where there is increasing pressure to reduce costs while improving outcomes, care pathways represent an opportunity to support clinicians in making evidence-based decisions about where to focus care-improvement efforts.

The term “care pathway” is often used interchangeably with “clinical pathway,” “critical pathway,” “integrated care pathway,” “collaborative care pathway,” or “care maps.” Although use of terminology varies, there is agreement that care pathways are evidence-based adaptations of clinical practice guidelines that aim to improve quality of care, reduce risks to patients, and improve outcomes. Whereas guidelines help establish the standard of care for a given condition, care pathways represent actionable ways to implement recommendations from clinical guidelines. Pathways often include guidance to review available treatment options and encourage patient education and access to care plans. Use of care pathways by payers and providers for management of specialty drugs in oncology and other therapeutic areas—such as rheumatoid arthritis, cardiology, diabetes and multiple sclerosis—is expected to grow.

Clinicians play a central role in the development and uptake of pathways. Many leading health systems are adopting a new approach based on care pathways by mapping steps in a patient’s...
journey through the entire health system for a given clinical condition. Taking this approach enables health systems to prioritize how resources are allocated and to identify outcome metrics that will help ensure optimal care delivery.

Avalere supports development of care pathways. We recently worked with the American Gastroenterological Association on a referral pathway for inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). Avalere oversaw development of the pathway, including facilitation of a consensus-based approach with an expert workgroup. The IBD Care Referral Pathway is expected to be published in the July 2019 issue of *Gastroenterology* but is currently available electronically on the journal’s website.

To learn more about Avalere’s work in the care pathway or clinical guidance development space, connect with us.