

# IMPACT NEWSLETTER

## ADVANCING POLICIES AIMED AT PROMOTING CARE COORDINATION

by Venn Strategies, LLC



The Obama Administration continues to make progress on implementing key provisions of the Affordable Care Act, including recently releasing final rules that govern Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) and announcing several payment demonstration programs aimed at improving patient care.

Since the last newsletter, NTOCC has actively engaged in the rulemaking process to advance policies aimed at promoting care coordination and effective transitions.

NTOCC submitted formal comments to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on the Medicare Shared Savings proposed rule and expressed support for provisions there were included to ensure that ACOs “attend carefully to care transitions” and prioritize patient engagement and shared decision-making.

NTOCC also urged CMS to develop, and include in future rulemakings, additional quality measures to promote shared accountability across care settings.

The final rule was released in mid-October and retained many key provisions that seek to ensure quality care transitions, including a requirement that ACOs will have to “define its methods

and processes established to coordinate care throughout an episode of care and during its transitions.”

On another front, NTOCC recently sent Dr. Carolyn Clancy, Director for the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (AHRQ), a letter applauding AHRQ’s new initiative to encourage clinicians and patients to engage in effective two-way communication to ensure safer care and better health outcomes.

This campaign aims to help patients understand the importance of taking control of their health care and offers tools to help facilitate sharing of information between patients and medical professionals.

**“ ... we expect Congress to spend much of next year trying to change the sequestration rules, which may mean additional cuts to the health care sector.”**

NTOCC has long advocated that patients should be provided with tools and resources to allow them to be informed consumers of care and identify questions to ask their care team during any transition.

While implementation of the Affordable Care Act moves forward, most of the attention related to health care policy on Capitol Hill has turned towards deficit reduction. The Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (aka. Super Committee) failed to reach agreement on a legislative proposal to reduce the deficit. This means that beginning in 2013, the sequestration process will be triggered which requires \$1.2 trillion in cuts

divided equally between defense and domestic spending, with exemptions for Medicaid, Social Security, war spending, and military personnel costs.

With regards to Medicare, the savings under the trigger are limited to reductions in provider payments only – there will be no increased cost to beneficiaries -- but those payments to providers and hospitals cannot be reduced by more than two percent. However, since these cuts are not scheduled to kick in until 2013, we expect Congress to spend much of next year trying to change the sequestration rules, which may mean additional cuts to the health care sector.

At the NTOCC meeting in November, the ATF was joined by Congressional staffers from the House Ways & Means and Senate Health Education, Pensions and Labor Committee who provided an overview of the Congressional landscape as it relates to health care. The staffers highlighted the intense focus on Capitol Hill for policies that lead to both improved health care quality and reduced spending.

To that end, NTOCC has released a new paper titled, “Improved Transitions of Patient Care Yield Tangible Savings,” available on the NTOCC website home page [here](#). It demonstrates the economic value of quality care transitions. NTOCC looks forward to sharing this document with policymakers to help emphasize the economic case for supporting policies that aim to improve health care transitions. ♦

*Venn Strategies, LLC is an NTOCC member and nationally recognized, full-service government relations and public affairs firm.*



### Dear NTOCC Coalition Member:

NTOCC brings tools and resources to the health care community helping to address the gaps and barriers we all face in transitions of care. We value the participation of the NTOCC Advisory Task Force and the over 3,000 subscribers and associate members who work

to improve transitions. Since its inception a little over five years ago, NTOCC has become a trusted source of information — not only for the US healthcare system, but in over 65 countries, as well.

As we move into 2012, NTOCC will be undergoing some exciting changes, increasing opportunities for organiza-

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# Web-Based Evaluation Tool To Be Released Soon

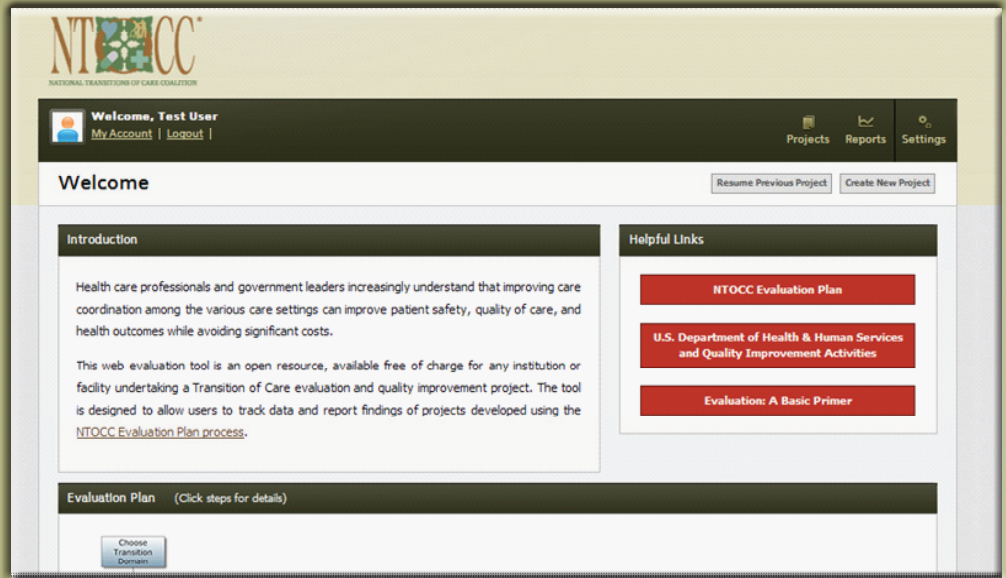
By Dr. Ed Davidson, PharmD, and Lisa Han, MPH, Insight Therapeutics, LLC

The long-awaited web-based evaluation tool is planned for release in the first quarter of 2012. Introduced at the November Advisory Task Force meeting, beta testing has started and final touches are being made to the program before its official launch to the public.

Based around the original Transitions of Care (TOC) evaluation documents introduced in 2009, the web-based evaluation tool is for institutions ready to move to the next phase of their TOC quality improvement efforts. The tool facilitates data entry, data analysis, and report generation in an easy-to-use format. Users will be able to input and visualize their data over time using the secure internet website, accessed through NTOCC's homepage.

In addition to helping institutions track their progress, the tool will give NTOCC feedback about what is happening in the community by identifying what organizations care about and which interventions and NTOCC tools they are implementing.

"Proving outcomes through quality or research studies is a critical initia-



tive for all health care professionals," said Cheri Lattimer, RN, BSN, NTOCC Director. "The addition of the Web-based Evaluation Tool to the NTOCC website will assist any provider looking to improve process, workflow or systems around transitions document, track and monitor their specific outcomes."

This unique opportunity to engage with stakeholders will help NTOCC document and substantiate its work over the past five years.

Those looking to use the tool will need to register at the NTOCC web site and assign an overall facility administrator.

The administrator can then add users who can create new projects and manage data entry and reporting. The tool is designed to be used hand in hand with the evaluation plans already available at [http://www.ntocc.org/Home/HealthCareProfessionals/WWS\\_HCP\\_Tools.aspx](http://www.ntocc.org/Home/HealthCareProfessionals/WWS_HCP_Tools.aspx).

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tions to support and encourage the important mission that NTOCC has undertaken. What will not change is our commitment to bringing additional tools to help patients, caregivers and providers and continuing work in the areas of measures, education, public policy, health information technology, provider and consumer resources.

I encourage each of you to participate with us in our ongoing efforts to create a collaborative community to work together in making a difference in how we transition patients and families across the care continuum. No one entity can do this by themselves, but by combin-

ing our expertise with our passion for better care, we can make a difference. I wish each of you a wonderful Holiday Season and look forward to working with you in 2012.

Best Wishes,



Cheri Lattimer, RN, BSN  
 NTOCC Director, CMSA Executive Director



## About the National Transitions of Care Coalition

The National Transitions of Care Coalition (NTOCC) was formed in 2006 bringing together thought leaders, patient advocates, and health care providers from various care settings dedicated to improving the quality of care coordination and communication when patients are transferred from one level of care to another. Transitions in care include a patient moving from primary care to specialty physicians; within the hospital it would include patients moving from the emergency department to various departments, such as surgery or intensive care; or when patients are discharged from the hospital and go home, into an

*NTOCC is chaired and coordinated by CMSA in partnership with Sanofi US.*

assisted living arrangements or into a skilled nursing facility. NTOCC is comprised of a diverse group of national associations and organizations addressing the critical issues surrounding transitions of care. NTOCC views transitions of care as a major challenge to health care delivery and realizes it can only be solved by breaking down the silos and barriers between different health care settings and working collaboratively for the good of the patient. Whether you are a patient, care giver, health care professional, policy maker or media representative, NTOCC can provide you with information and tools to better understand, and improve, transitions of care challenges.