

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## ABOUT HEALTH QUALITY, PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT, AND THE VALUE-BASED PHARMACY INITIATIVE...

### What is “health quality”?

Quality is defined as the degree to which a system or process meets customer needs or expectations. In this context, health quality refers to the achievement of better health outcomes and improved population health through the delivery of high-value health care services.

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### What is value-based health care and how does it apply to pharmacy?

Value in the context of health care is defined as the health outcomes achieved relative to the dollars spent in the provision of care<sup>1</sup>. As health care costs continue to rise rapidly, the value of our investment in health care is increasingly becoming a concern for Canadians. This has led to the emergence of value-based health care as the basis for provider reimbursement, and more broadly as the basis for health care funding in general. Value-based Pharmacy refers to the funding of pharmacy services in the context of the quality of care delivered by pharmacy professionals and the outcomes achieved.

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### What is performance measurement?

A growing trend both in Canada and internationally, the assessment and reporting of the quality of care delivered by health care providers such as physicians, pharmacists, and hospitals has long been recognized to improve quality of care and patient outcomes. Achieving a high-quality, high-value health care system is directly related to performance measurement.

Measuring pharmacy performance, assessing it against a set of validated medication-use quality metrics and communicating feedback to individual pharmacies brings insights into what each pharmacy is already doing well and the areas they can improve to drive health quality within their practice.

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### Why is GSC doing this?

GSC, and the benefits industry as a whole, is in an evolving relationship with all providers, including pharmacists, as the value provided by employer-sponsored benefits programs is continually being evaluated. Our clients have higher-than-ever expectations of us and their plans, and they expect to see accountability for the benefit dollars they spend. They want to know this money is spent wisely and that their employees are receiving the highest quality care.



<sup>1</sup>N Engl J Med 2010; 363:2477-2481

As pharmacists' scope of practice expands beyond dispensing, GSC sees an opportunity to invest in a greater range of pharmacy services that drive the delivery of quality health care. Pharmacists are well-positioned and uniquely trained to help contribute to the provision of high-quality patient care and improving performance on key measures.

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## What are PQA and PQS?

**Pharmacy Quality Solutions**, or PQS, is GSC's partner that helped us develop the Value-based Pharmacy initiative. A U.S.-based company, PQS is a leading provider of medication-use quality-assessment services that support performance improvement by delivering reliable and consistent data, insight, and guidance. PQS is an independent organization that measures pharmacy performance without the input of GSC or any other payor. PQS's neutral arbiter status is essential in ensuring an unbiased assessment of pharmacy performance.

As the primary developer of medication-use quality measures, through its affiliation with the **Pharmacy Quality Alliance** (PQA), PQS supports over 95 per cent of all pharmacies in U.S., and over 30 million Americans are in their database.

PQA, also located in the U.S., is a non-profit, consensus-based, multi-stakeholder membership organization committed to improving health care quality and patient safety with a focus on the appropriate use of medications. PQS is led by a team of experienced pharmacists and quality improvement experts who were instrumental in the creation and testing of PQA measures.

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## What is EQuIPP?

**EQuIPP** (or Electronic Quality Improvement Platform for Plans and Pharmacies) is a subscription-based web platform that shows pharmacies their performance information along with opportunities for improvement. By using EQuIPP, you can track your performance on several medication-related quality measures, such as medication adherence rates, disease management, and patient safety information. It also provides you with information to help identify patients in your pharmacy with quality-related care gaps and to adjust the services you're providing to them as needed.

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## What other information can I get from the EQuIPP dashboard?

The EQuIPP dashboard delves deep into pharmacy performance; you'll find:

### *Performance Data*

EQuIPP provides performance data and benchmarks on quality measures that focus on medication adherence, disease management, and patient safety. Your pharmacy's quality rating is derived from claims data gathered through your interactions with GSC plan members and reflects how your patient-centered care activities are impacting the quality of medication use.

### *Performance Trending*

EQuIPP provides six months of rolling performance data that shows how your pharmacy's performance is changing over time as a result of improvement activities. It also provides a Year-To-Date quality rating that reflects your cumulative performance over an entire calendar year.

## *Peer Comparisons*

EQuIPP allows you to see where you stand on measures compared to peers in your pharmacy organization, across your province, and nationally. EQuIPP also allows your pharmacy to compare performance to the top 20 per cent of pharmacies across the country.

## *Outlier Data*

Outliers information allows you to focus your patient-centered care efforts on those patients who need it the most.

## *Insights*

EQuIPP provides insights that help you understand the key issues revealed by your performance data that represent opportunities for improvement. You'll also learn about potential factors associated with suboptimal performance and your competitive position in the marketplace.

## *Guidance*

Organizations seeking to truly improve the quality of their services are offered guidance on implementation of changes to organizational culture, operations, or clinical services that will help you continually improve the quality of care for your patients.

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## **How do I access the EQuIPP dashboard?**

EQuIPP (or Electronic Quality Improvement Platform for Plans and Pharmacies) is a subscription-based web platform that displays performance information along with opportunities for improvement. We encourage you to subscribe to EQuIPP and take advantage of its insights into your pharmacy's performance. It is important that you take the time to understand your performance data and opportunities for improvement so that you are prepared for phase three of the Value-based Pharmacy program.

To gain access to EQuIPP services contact your corporate office or visit [www.equipp.org](http://www.equipp.org) to submit your inquiry using the "Support" link (located in the top and bottom right corners). If you are part of a retail pharmacy banner, please include this information in the inquiry to help expedite the process.

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## **When will GSC implement its new Value-based Pharmacy reimbursement framework?**

GSC has worked closely with the national pharmacy groups to develop a reimbursement framework that is fair to pharmacists and ensures the health needs of our plan members are served. The GSC value-based reimbursement framework is a pay-for-performance scheme that will reward high-performing pharmacies while incentivizing low-performing pharmacies to engage in quality improvement initiatives. Implementation of the new reimbursement framework is planned for July 1, 2020. For more details on the Value-based Pharmacy reimbursement framework refer to the "Value-based Pharmacy Reimbursement Framework" document.

## Who else is measuring performance?

Performance measurement is becoming more and more prevalent in health care internationally and within Canada. For example, Health Quality Ontario is a provincial agency that monitors and analyzes virtually all aspects of Ontario's health care system against a set of measures or indicators. It produces reports, makes recommendations, and supports improvements to better the patient experience. While Health Quality Ontario, like other **provincial quality councils**, tracks the performance of pharmacies in institutions such as hospitals and long-term care, it doesn't currently measure the performance of community pharmacies which is why GSC has stepped in to leverage our claims data and engage our pharmacy partners.

In the heels of our initiative, the Ontario College of Pharmacy (OCP) and Health Quality Ontario have now partnered to develop a set of quality indicators for community pharmacy to understand its impact on patient outcomes and the health system. For more information, visit the OCP Quality Indicators for Pharmacy [webpage](#).

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## Why were these measures chosen?

Refer to the "Understanding the Value-based Pharmacy" document.

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## How is the Pharmacy Quality Rating calculated?

Refer to the "Understanding the Value-based Pharmacy" document.

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## How should the quality rating inform patient care?

The Pharmacy Quality Rating is a reflection of a pharmacy's overall performance, provides an opportunity for self-evaluation, and is meant to help inform the ongoing evolution of pharmacy practice to deliver high-quality patient care that aligns with established clinical care guidelines. The provision of individualized patient care is the responsibility of individual pharmacists who, in keeping with the **Model Standards of Practice for Canadian Pharmacists** as set by the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA), have a responsibility to make clinical decisions that are in the best interest of patients. Patient-care decisions should be informed by a comprehensive risk-benefit assessment taking into consideration the variables unique to a patient.

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## Who else has access to my pharmacy performance information?

Individual performance measures information is available only to GSC and the individual pharmacy through a subscription-based web platform, EQuIPP. Pharmacy Quality Ratings that reflect overall pharmacy performance are available to GSC plan members through our Online Services.

## QUESTIONS?

- To contact GSC with your questions, click on the "Contact Us" link on providerConnect.
- To sign up for your EQuIPP dashboard visit [www.equipp.org](http://www.equipp.org) and submit your inquiry using the "Support" link (located in the top and bottom right corners). If you are part of a retail pharmacy banner, please include this information in the inquiry to help expedite the process.