



October 2009

Dear Friend of NCQA:

In 2010, the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) will celebrate our 20th anniversary as the nation's leading evaluator of health care quality and efficiency. We will kick things off with NCQA's annual Health Quality Awards dinner in Washington D.C. on March 23rd, and continue throughout the year. I hope you will join us as we celebrate our accomplishments and recognize the hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals and organizations who have made them possible.

In our first 20 years, NCQA has literally rewritten the health care dictionary, introducing the concepts of transparency, accountability and value into the health care lexicon. When we began, some argued that you can't measure quality in health care – that medicine was an art not a science. With such innovations as Quality Compass, our Health Plan Report Card, and our annual State of Health Care Quality report we broke that myth down and helped build the value proposition.

Through the development of HEDIS® and our rigorous Accreditation and Certification programs, NCQA has touched the lives of hundreds of millions of Americans, including 120 million people covered today by accountable health plans reviewed by NCQA's experts. Through the development and implementation of HEDIS clinical quality measures, NCQA has driven remarkable improvements in care. For example, thanks to the efforts of NCQA and the health plans and other organizations we evaluate:

- Children are nearly three times as likely to have had all recommended immunizations as in 1997
- Diabetics are twice as likely to have cholesterol controlled as in 1998
- And more than 97% of cardiac patients prescribed beta-blockers after a heart attack (up from 62% in 1996)

These improvements save lives. We conservatively estimate that the quality improvements have resulted in nearly 4 million fewer deaths and billions of dollars in avoided health care costs and spending.

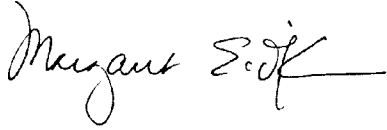
NCQA's innovations in evaluation have also led to improvements in the delivery of health care and the protection of patients' rights. A dozen states now require health plans to be NCQA Accredited in order to do business with the state. And 40 states recognize NCQA's standards to meet or exceed their own requirements. Medicare, Medicaid and the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program all recognize NCQA Accreditation as the "gold standard" of health care quality review.

As we celebrate the accomplishments of the last 20 years, NCQA does not plan to rest on its laurels. Today's American health care system remains too costly, too inefficient and far too uneven in the delivery of quality care. There is much we need to do and the time to begin that work is now. That is why I believe we must establish a clear set of goals and benchmarks for improvement so that 10 years from now – in 2020 – we will have a health care delivery system that can truly be called high quality.

Achieving this will require the combined efforts of everyone with a stake in health care. That includes patients and consumers, doctors and nurses, workers and businesses, regulators and legislators, health

plans and hospitals. NCQA intends to engage all of those voices in a national dialogue that we will launch in July with a National Forum on the Future of Quality Healthcare, to be convened in Washington D.C. Our goal will be to chart a course for 2020 and create clear, tangible goals for all of us to achieve.

I am extraordinarily proud of what NCQA and our partners have achieved in these first 20 years and am eager to begin the work ahead to achieve our common vision of a quality health care system for all Americans. Please join us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Margaret E. O'Kane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Margaret E. O'Kane
President