



# The State of Health Care Quality 2018

---

December 2018

## Introduction

NCQA produces *The State of Health Care Quality Report* every autumn to focus on key quality issues facing the United States and to drive improvement in the delivery of evidence-based medicine.

This 2018 report shows average health plan quality results, by product line, for select Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS®) measures in calendar year 2017.

**This summary focuses on HEDIS measures that are part of the Medicare Advantage Stars program. Results for all HEDIS measures included the 2018 State of Health Care Quality Report are online: <https://www.ncqa.org/report-cards/health-plans/state-of-health-care-quality-report/>.**

More than 1,000 health plans voluntarily disclose the clinical quality, customer experience and resource use data that are this report's foundation. All data are rigorously audited. Consumer experience information is independently collected and verified.

We commend all the health plans that contributed data for this report, and for the commitment to accountability and quality improvement they show by disclosing their performance.

HEDIS® is a registered trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).

## Why Focus on Star Measures

This summary focuses on HEDIS measures in the Medicare Stars program, because Stars is one of the best known and most effective pay-for-performance programs.

The steady improvement of Stars measures documented in this summary confirms the animating adage of quality improvement: “What gets measured gets improved.”

### Measures With Largest Performance Gains by Product Line, 2014–2017

HEDIS Measure	Product Line	Improvement	2017 Rate	2014 Rate
Adult BMI Assessment	Commercial PPO	17.7	67.1	49.4
	Commercial HMO	5.1	80.3	75.9
	Medicaid HMO	4.6	84.5	79.9
Osteoporosis Management in Women Who Had a Fracture	Medicare HMO	8.6	46.7	38.1
	Medicare PPO	8.9	39.1	30.2

### Improvement Beyond Medicare Advantage

Measures with good performance in one product line tend to have good performance in other product lines.

Two measures in Medicare Stars are the most-improved measures over 3 years across all 5 product lines that this report tracks.

## Good News for Employers

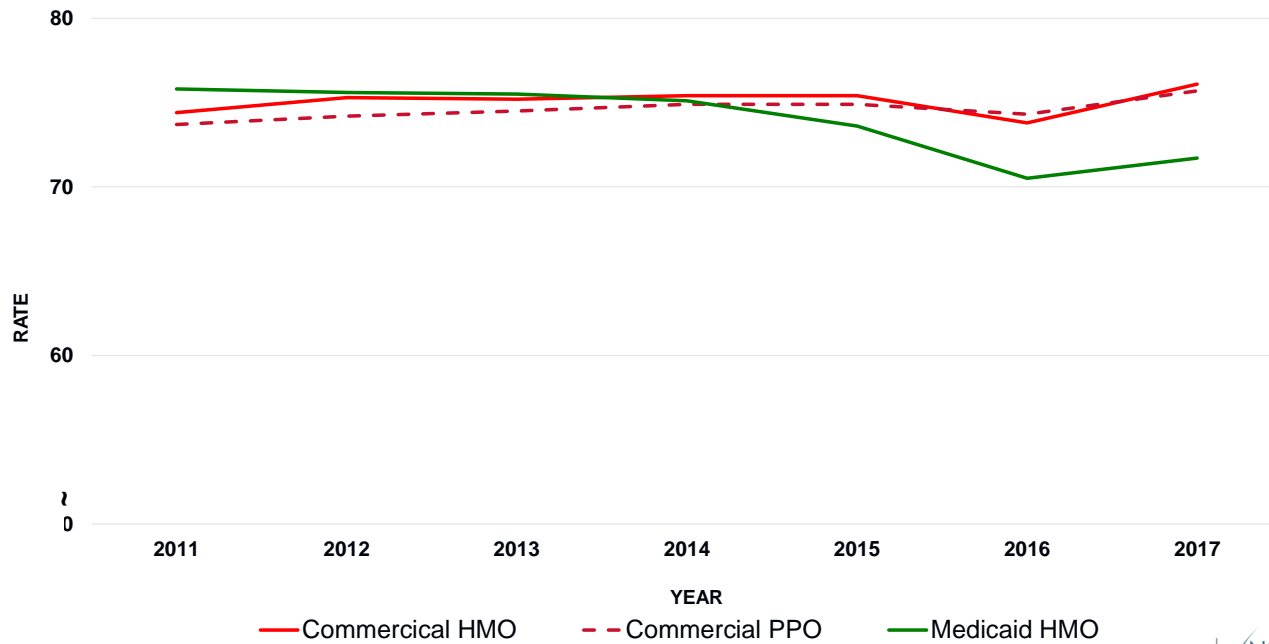
HEDIS Measure	Importance to Employers
<b>Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain</b>	Conservative treatment and avoiding expensive imaging are key to effective, efficient treatment of uncomplicated low back pain, which is one of the most common reasons for seeking health care services.
<b>Adult BMI Assessment</b>	Obesity is estimated to cost employers over \$4,000 per obese employee; costs rise in relation to a worker's body mass index (BMI).
<b>Colorectal Cancer Screening</b>	Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths, yet more than a third of adults 50–75 do not get recommended screenings.
<b>Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Screening</b>	Nearly 10% of working age adults have diabetes. Managing, monitoring and self-care are crucial to preventing serious complications.

## Employers and Health Care Quality

Employers helped create the health care quality movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s. A sign of their early influence and advocacy for better care is that HEDIS was originally called the “Health Plan Employer and Information Set.”

Progress on measures relevant to common, costly illnesses affecting people of working age (or affecting their elderly parents, for whom working adults are often caregivers) is good news for employers and for population health.

## Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain

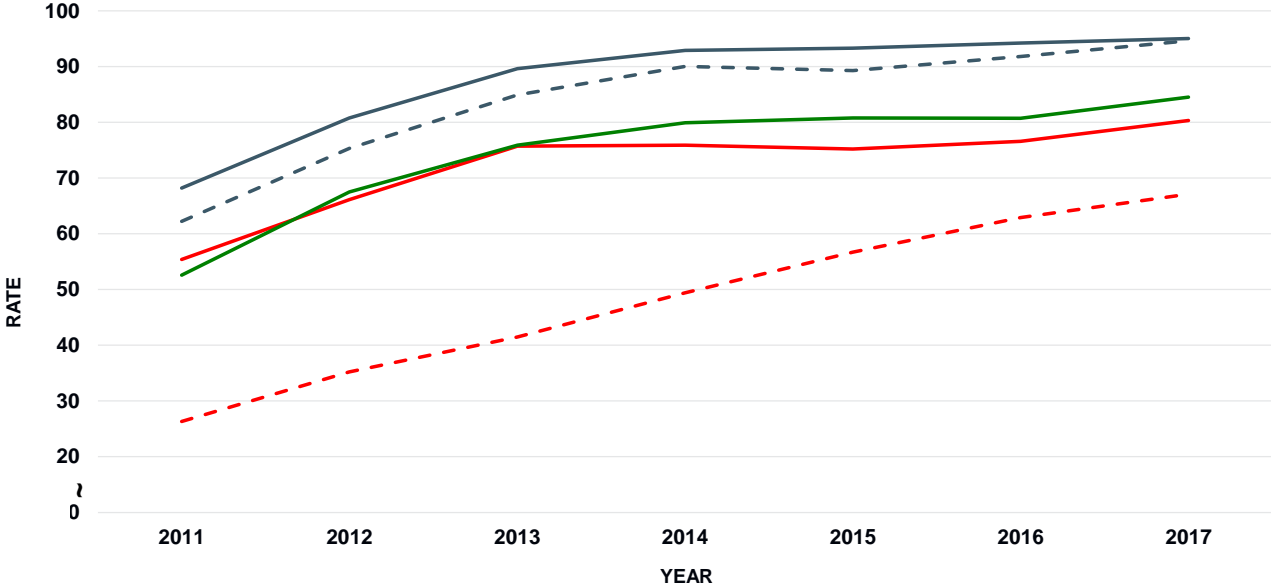


### Why This Measure Matters

Evidence shows that unnecessary or routine imaging (X-ray, MRI, CT scans) for low back pain is not associated with improved outcomes. It also exposes patients to unnecessary harms such as radiation.

Avoiding imaging for patients when there is no indication of an underlying condition can prevent unnecessary harm and unintended consequences to patients, and can reduce health care costs.

# Adult BMI Assessment



— Commercial HMO   - - Commercial PPO   — Medicaid HMO   — Medicare HMO   - - Medicare PPO   6 | NCQA

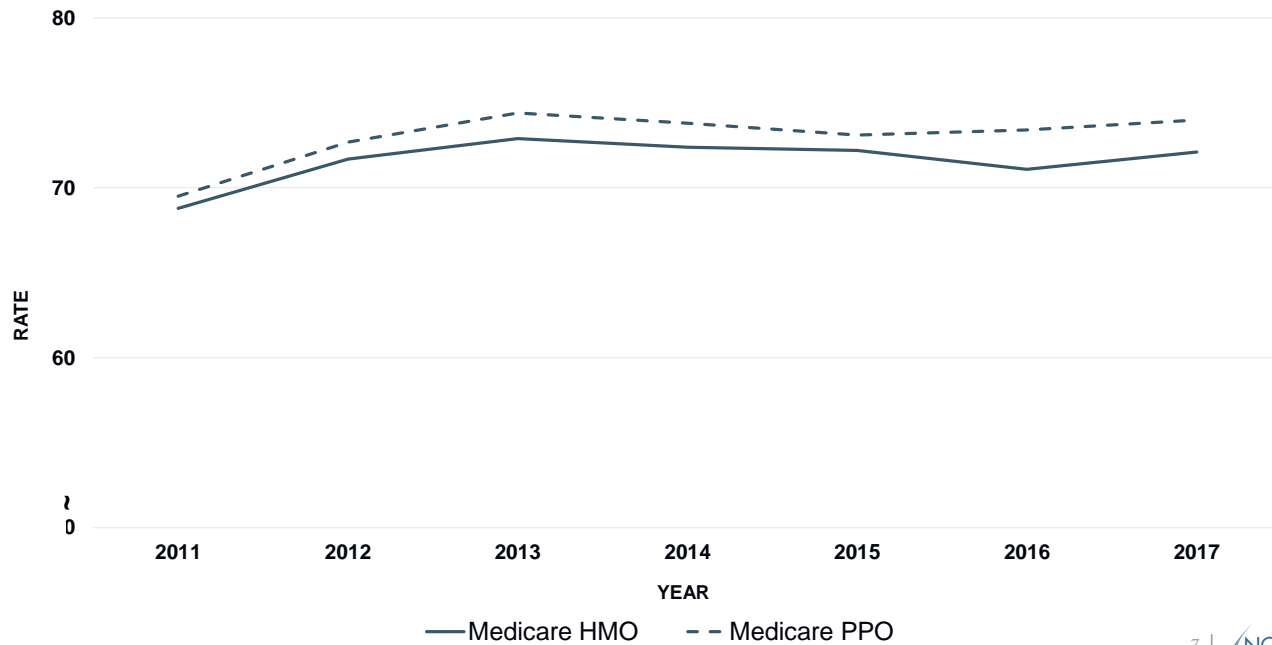
## Why This Measure Matters

Obesity contributes to nearly 1 in 5 deaths in the United States.

BMI provides the most useful population-level measure of overweight and obesity.

Careful monitoring of BMI will help health care providers identify adults who are at risk and provide focused advice and services to help them reach and maintain a healthier weight.

## Flu Vaccinations for Adults Ages 65 and Older

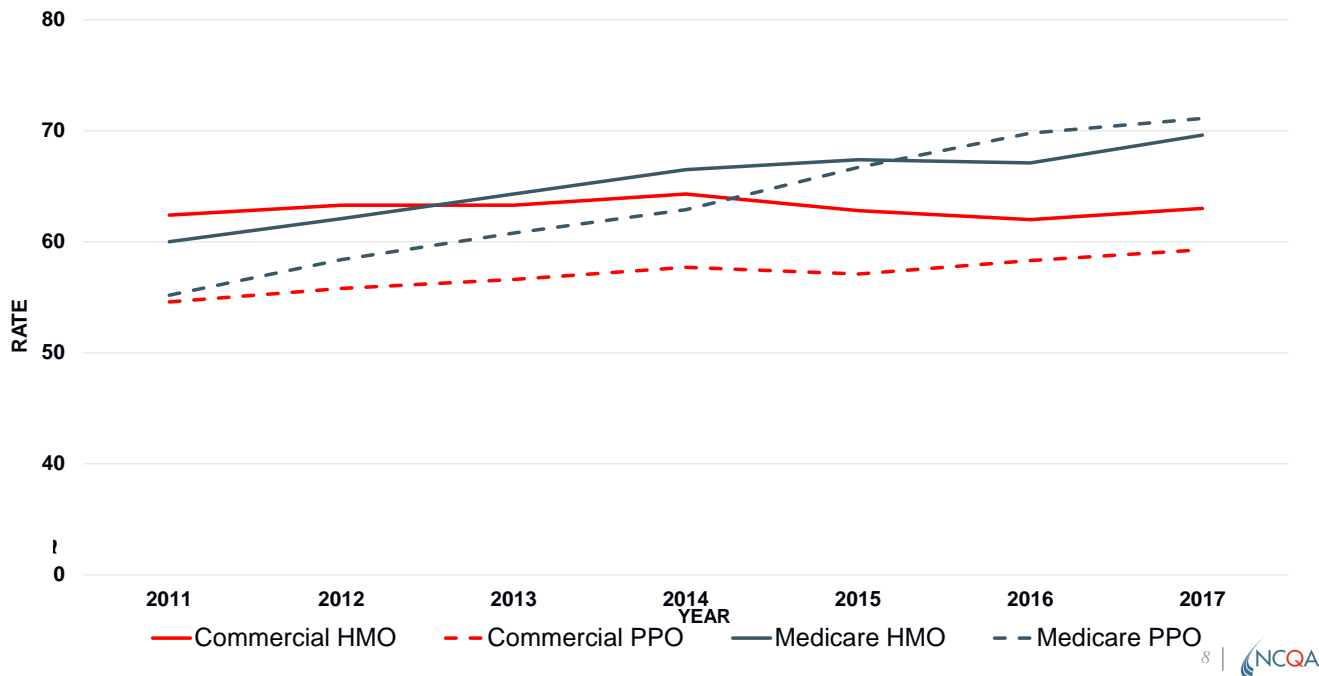


### Why This Measure Matters

Influenza (flu) is a common and contagious respiratory illness caused by a set of viruses that can result in serious complications or death.

The flu vaccine is recommended for all adults and vaccinations can reduce flu-related hospitalizations by 71%.

## Colorectal Cancer Screening



### Why This Measure Matters

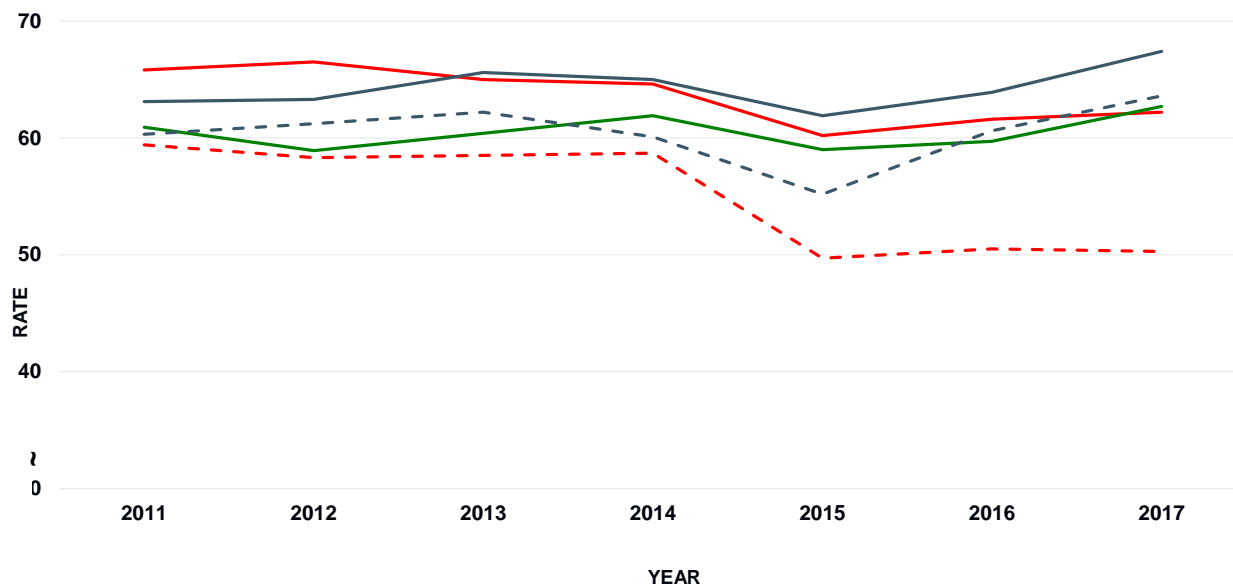
Treatment for colorectal cancer in its earliest stage can lead to a 90 percent survival rate after five years. However, more than a third of adults 50–75 do not get recommended screenings.

Colorectal cancer screening of asymptomatic adults in that age group can catch polyps before they become cancerous or can detect colorectal cancer in its early stages, when treatment is most effective.



## Comprehensive Diabetes Care: Blood Pressure Control

(<149/90mm Hg)



— Commercial HMO - - Commercial PPO — Medicaid HMO — Medicare HMO - - Medicare PPO

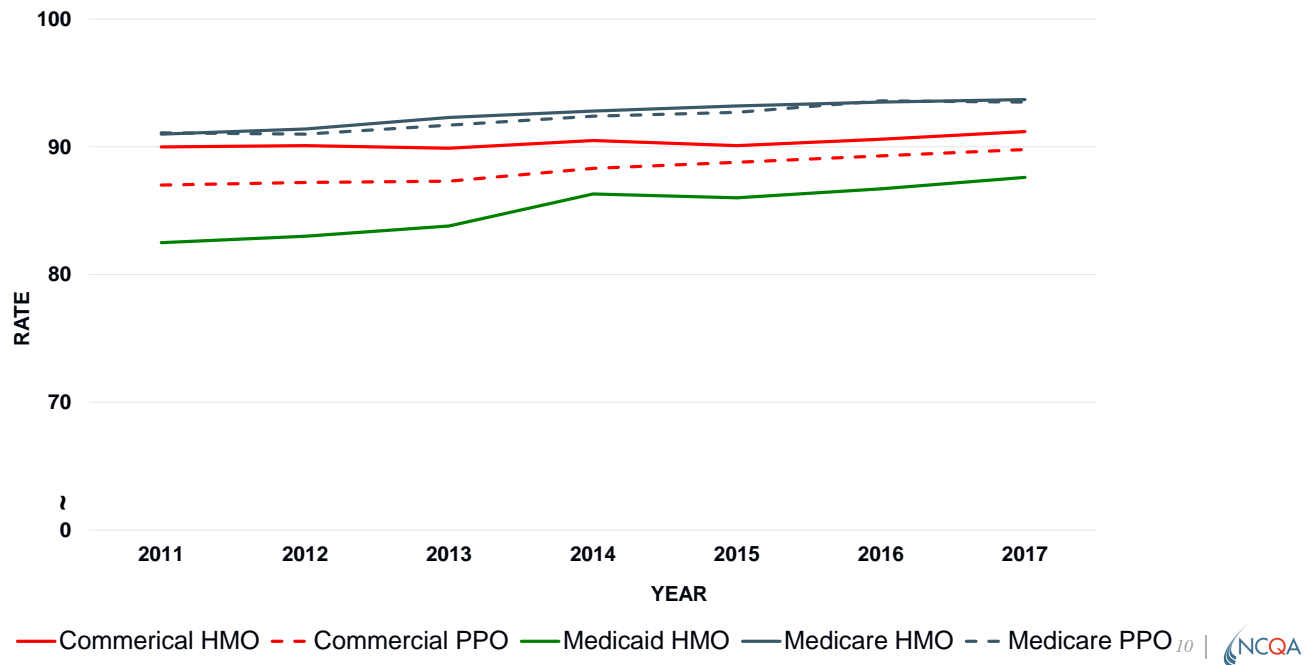


### Why This Measure Matters

Left unmanaged, diabetes can lead to serious complications, including heart disease, stroke, hypertension, blindness, kidney disease, diseases of the nervous system, amputations and premature death.

Proper diabetes management is essential to control blood glucose, reduce risks for complications and prolong life. With support from health care providers, patients can manage their diabetes with self-care, taking medications as instructed, eating a healthy diet, being physically active and quitting smoking.

## Comprehensive Diabetes Care: HbA1c Screening



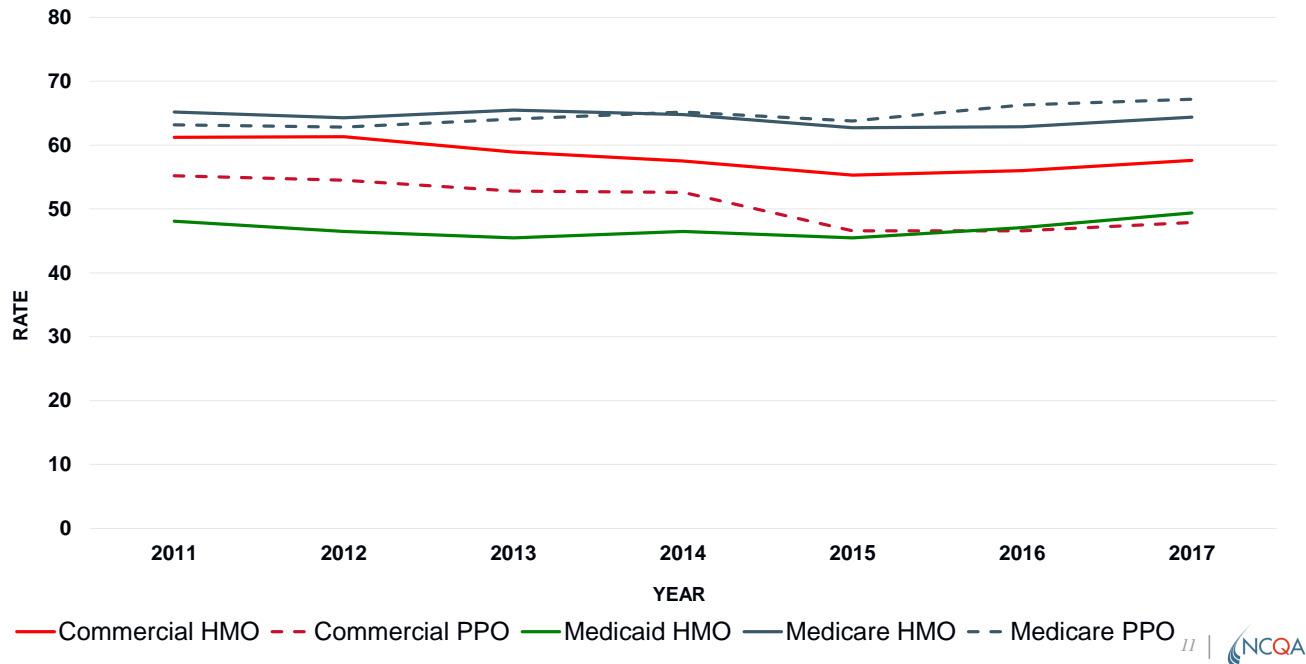
### Why This Measure Matters

Left unmanaged, diabetes can lead to serious complications, including heart disease, stroke, hypertension, blindness, kidney disease, diseases of the nervous system, amputations and premature death.

Proper diabetes management is essential to control blood glucose, reduce risks for complications and prolong life. With support from health care providers, patients can manage their diabetes with self-care, taking medications as instructed, eating a healthy diet, being physically active and quitting smoking.

## Comprehensive Diabetes Care: Good Glycemic Control

(HbA1c <8%)



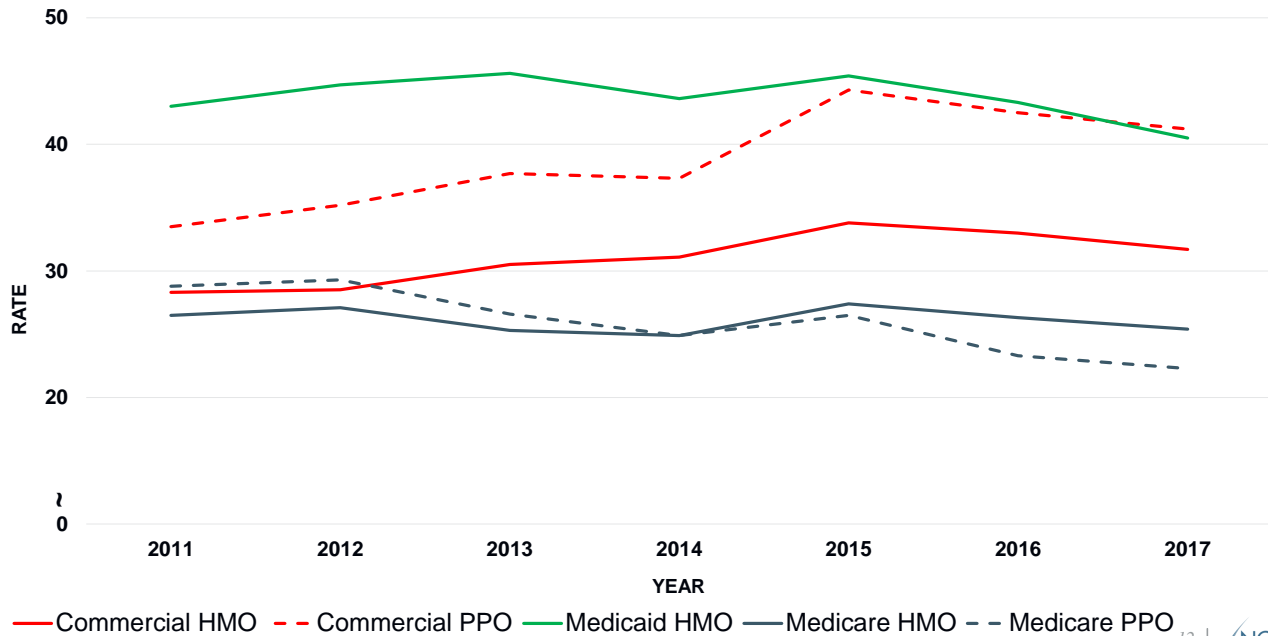
### Why This Measure Matters

Left unmanaged, diabetes can lead to serious complications, including heart disease, stroke, hypertension, blindness, kidney disease, diseases of the nervous system, amputations and premature death.

Proper diabetes management is essential to control blood glucose, reduce risks for complications and prolong life. With support from health care providers, patients can manage their diabetes with self-care, taking medications as instructed, eating a healthy diet, being physically active and quitting smoking.

## Comprehensive Diabetes Care: Poor Glycemic Control

*(HbA1c >9%)—Lower rates signify better performance.*



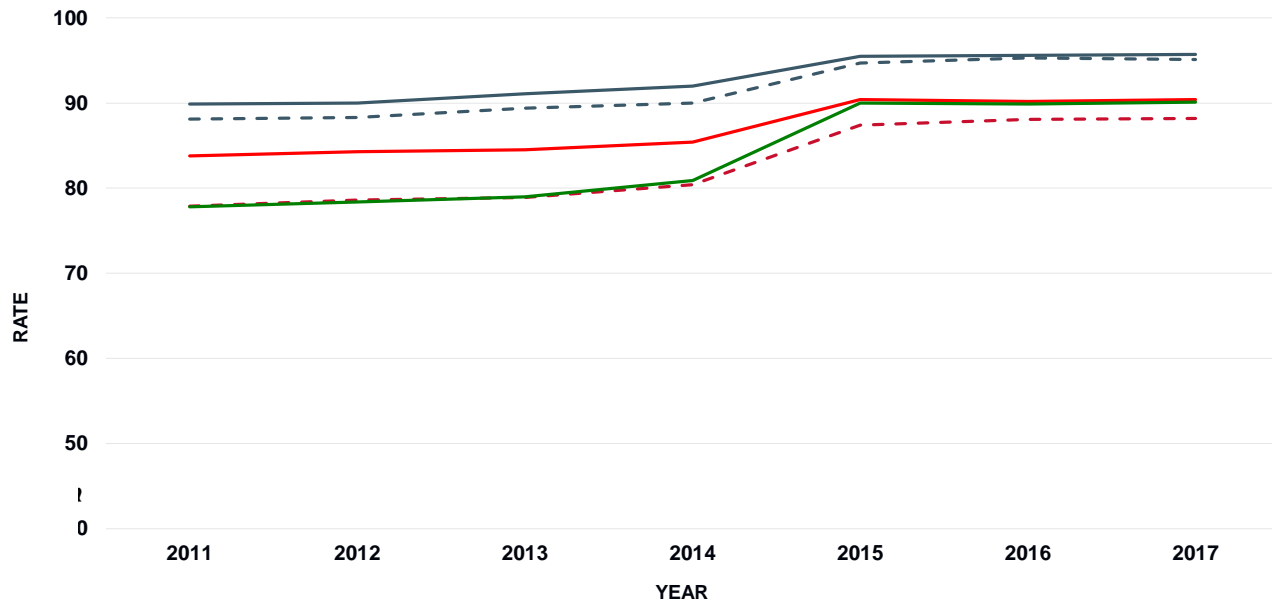
12 | NCQA

### Why This Measure Matters

Left unmanaged, diabetes can lead to serious complications, including heart disease, stroke, hypertension, blindness, kidney disease, diseases of the nervous system, amputations and premature death.

Proper diabetes management is essential to control blood glucose, reduce risks for complications and prolong life. With support from health care providers, patients can manage their diabetes with self-care, taking medications as instructed, eating a healthy diet, being physically active and quitting smoking.

## Comprehensive Diabetes Care: Medical Attention for Nephropathy



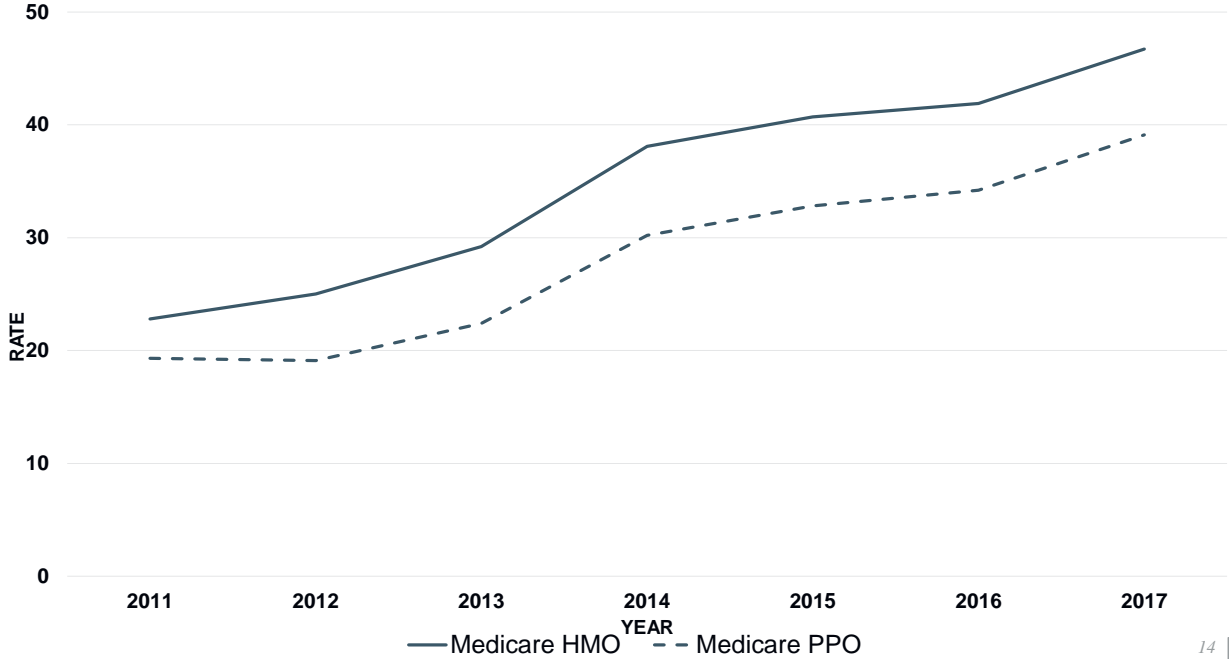
— Commercial HMO 
 - - Commercial PPO 
 — Medicaid HMO 
 — Medicare HMO 
 - - Medicare PPO

### Why This Measure Matters

Left unmanaged, diabetes can lead to serious complications, including heart disease, stroke, hypertension, blindness, kidney disease, diseases of the nervous system, amputations and premature death.

Proper diabetes management is essential to control blood glucose, reduce risks for complications and prolong life. With support from health care providers, patients can manage their diabetes with self-care, taking medications as instructed, eating a healthy diet, being physically active and quitting smoking.

# Osteoporosis Management in Women Who Had a Fracture



## Why This Measure Matters

Osteoporosis is a serious disease in the elderly that can impact their quality of life. Osteoporosis is a bone disease characterized by low bone mass, which leads to bone fragility and increased susceptibility to fractures of the hip, spine and wrist.

Osteoporotic fractures, particularly hip fractures, are associated with chronic pain and disability, loss of independence, decreased quality of life and increased mortality. With appropriate screening and treatment, the risk of osteoporosis-related fractures can be reduced.

