



## Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois: Using Hospital Quality Reporting to Motivate Improvements in Patient Safety

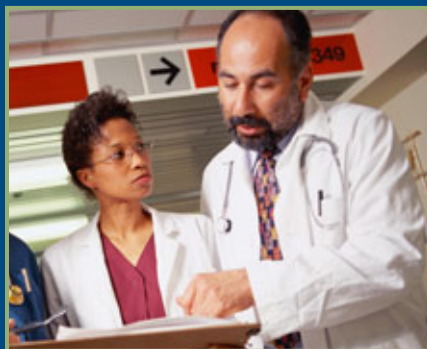
### HEALTH PLAN PROFILE

*Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBSIL) provides several million Illinois members with comprehensive and affordable health plans. BCBSIL is a division of Health Care Service Corporation (HCSC), which also encompasses BlueCross Blue Shield plans in Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma. BCBSIL has been using Select Quality Care<sup>®</sup> Professional from WebMD Quality Services since 2001 to produce its annual BCBSIL Hospital Profile, which supports numerous reporting, quality improvement and contracting initiatives.*



### Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois

- Largest insurer in Illinois
- Deploys Select Quality Care Professional to create annual BCBSIL Hospital Profile
- Built customized database utilizing MedPar data and internal claims data
- Has used the data to assist with contracting decisions and develop a high-performance network



Like many health plans, BCBSIL responded to the Institute of Medicine's watershed 1999 report on medical errors with a renewed emphasis on developing programs that would motivate hospitals to improve patient safety. In 2001, BCBSIL chose Select Quality Care Professional decision support software to analyze the performance of hospitals in its network on multiple indicators related to health care quality and safety.

### BUILDING A HOSPITAL PROFILE

The project began by utilizing detailed inpatient administrative hospital discharge data on patients of all ages, known as all-payer data. But, BCBSIL ran into a roadblock the following year when the State of Illinois stopped making this data available. BCBSIL and WebMD Quality Services decided to pursue an innovative solution: building a customized database that integrated MedPar data (inpatient administrative hospital discharge data for people who are over 65 and/or disabled) with BCBSIL's own claims data.

"We were the first plan to take the approach of combining our plan data with MedPar data. One of the reasons that the results are so meaningful is that we represent large percentage of the market share for commercial business," said Carol Wilhoit, M.D., M.S., Medical Director, Quality Improvement for BCBSIL. "When we added our claims data to the MedPar data, we had a substantial proportion of coverage for all procedures."

BCBSIL is currently working on releasing its 4th annual hospital profile to 178 Illinois hospitals (93 urban hospitals and 85 rural hospitals). The BCBSIL Hospital Profile incorporates numerous measures from various data sources, such as:

“Select Quality Care Professional enables us to provide backup detail on every indicator, explain our methodology and offer question-by-question responses so hospitals understand their performance.”

— Roberta Berg  
Director, Quality & Research for BCBSIL

Measures	Data Sources
Leapfrog	Leapfrog Website, TMIT and BCBSIL Hospital Survey
Member Survey	BCBSIL Member Survey
AHRQ Indicators	BCBSIL Claims+ MedPar Data
Efficiency	BCBSIL Claims Data and Inquiry Data
Physician Survey	BCBSIL Physician Surveys
Structural Indicators	JCAHO + HFAP Websites and BCBSIL Hospital Survey
Hospital Quality Alliance Indicators	WebMD Quality Services
Participation in State and National QI Initiatives	BCBSIL Hospital Survey

Each year, BCBSIL sends the Hospital Profile to every Illinois non-government, non-specialty hospital with which it contracts. “We have a scoring mechanism that adds the measures up to an aggregate score, so hospitals can see where they fall compared to others in their peer group,” said Roberta Berg, Director, Quality & Research. “Select Quality Care Professional enables us to provide backup detail on every indicator, explain our methodology and offer question-by-question responses so hospitals understand their performance.”

To create a system that motivates improvement and rewards performance and outcomes, some profile-related indicators are publicly reported in BCBSIL’s member newsletter and web site.

#### ADJUSTMENTS AND CUSTOMIZATIONS ADD VALUE, ENHANCE ACCEPTANCE

To improve comparability between hospitals, BCBSIL worked with WebMD Quality Services to make a number of adjustments based on input from hospitals, including:

- Exclusion of admissions involving a transfer in from another hospital
- Use of severity adjustment variables (ARDRGs) and age cohorts
- Adjusting each hospital’s complication rate by a relative weight calculated for every Age-ARDRG level and every complication included in the profile

In addition, BCBSIL and WebMD Quality Services adjusted the Hospital Profile so that indicators with very small numerators and/or denominators are not scored, and indicator results are not reported when a specific hospital has a small denominator.

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— Carol Wilhoit, M.D., M.S.,  
Medical Director,  
Quality Improvement  
for Blue Cross Blue  
Shield of Illinois

“For example, if one hospital has 20 people eligible and one complication, and another hospital has 10 people eligible and no complications, the numbers are too small to analyze meaningful differences in performance,” said Berg. “But we also found that, for a complication like transfusion reactions, we might have a denominator of several thousand and only 10 complications in the entire state. Again, you can’t distinguish performance, so we try to be thoughtful in what we score and report.”

### ENHANCING HOSPITAL CONTRACTING

In addition to helping hospitals understand their performance and how they relate to their peers, the Hospital Profile has been beneficial for BCBSIL’s contracting process as well.

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When questions arise as to whether BCBSIL should continue to contract with a hospital, the data allows BCBSIL to quickly evaluate how important the hospital is to their network and analyze other local hospitals that could provide the same services and equal or higher quality.

Some components of the hospital profile are incorporated into the hospital contracting process, an initiative that BCBSIL expects will expand in the future.

BCBSIL has also used the hospital data at its fingertips to format its BlueChoice Select high-performance network. “We created something very different in the marketplace by not restricting physicians; if physicians are on staff at any of the hospitals in our high-performing network, they can be part of the physician panel,” said Dr. Wilhoit.

### FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

BCBSIL is constantly looking for new ways to apply the data generated by Select Quality Care Professional. As the health plan adds resources, BCBSIL is considering ways to make use of prevention indicators.

“Our sense is that prevention indicators aren’t a good way to look at hospital performance, because they have more to do with what happens before patients are admitted,” said Dr. Wilhoit. “But we have a large HMO with close to 1 million members who are assigned to medical groups or IPAs. We think it could be worth analyzing the prevention indicators at the medical group level to see if that’s a valid method for gauging medical group performance.”

Whatever data-driven project BCBSIL decides to focus on in the future, they feel confident that WebMD Quality Services will work with them to make it succeed. “Accessibility, customization and high-level customer service are part of the culture at WebMD Quality Services,” said Dr. Wilhoit.