

## **QualityCounts™ For Employees – May 2010**

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### **Comparative Effectiveness Research: What It Means For You**

Good information is the key to quality health care. News regarding your health can be overwhelming and confusing. Several questions can arise and the best treatment option for one person is not necessarily the best, or even a safe, option for you.

Upon receiving news from a doctor, you likely have several initial questions such as:

- What does this mean?
- What should I do about it?
- How will this affect my life?

The choices are endless. The simple question, “What’s the best option for me?” suddenly becomes the most difficult to answer. The best option is not always clear or obvious. This dilemma has led to a type of scientific research called comparative effectiveness.

Comparative effectiveness research helps you sort through the information and take an informed course of action by comparing two or more types of treatment, such as different drugs, for the same disease. Comparative effectiveness also can compare types of surgery or other kinds of medical procedures and tests for the same diagnosis.

For example, adults with type 2 diabetes have a vast array of oral medications available with various benefits and side effects. Comparative effectiveness can help here, with clearly laid out pros and cons to each medication, helping you and your doctor make the best decision. There is a further study on the comparative effectiveness of pre-mixed insulin preparations and their reactions with oral anti-diabetic medications and lifestyle choices. In addition, this research can help keep costs down. It is often the case that newer or more expensive treatments or drugs do not work any better than older or less expensive treatments.

One reason for the varied quality of health care is that sometimes doctors and nurses just don’t know or follow the latest research. In addition, once a new piece of scientific evidence emerges, it takes an average of 17 years before doctors routinely incorporate that information into how they practice medicine.

Using comparative effectiveness research will help you and your doctor determine the best treatment and management of an illness. The evidence is weighed and presented to you and your doctors in a usable way.

If you have been diagnosed with an illness or condition you can visit the AHRQ’s Effective Health Care program’s consumer guides page to see if they’ve published relevant information. The AHRQ has published comparative effectiveness research for conditions from diabetes to osteoarthritis to breast cancer and are in an ongoing process to provide more and more research.

Visit the [consumer guides page](#).

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