WASHINGTON
All-Payer
Claims Database

Washington state's APCD is working. Here's how:

Policy-makers, researchers and consumers are now able to dig into the WA-APCD, an extraordinary compilation of information about how Washington residents use and pay for health care.

After several years of intense stakeholder engagement, data gathering, review and analysis, Washington state's All-Payer Claims Database is working—and at an extraordinary scale.

By combining records about hospital, clinic, dental and prescription costs, we're starting to getting a better picture of the state population's health and the health care system. This data is also used to inform consumer choices.

Understanding the various factors that drive health care costs is the first step in seeing how we can contain costs and improve the health of everyone in our state. This progress would not be possible without the extraordinary cooperation of hundreds of insurers, providers, and health care industry experts.

For the Public: www.WAHealthCareCompare.com

- Anyone can compare the cost and quality of medical services for providers in their community.

- The website already won a national award for how well it communicates complexity of health data. The National Association of Health Data Organizations gave Washington their 2018 Innovation in Data Dissemination Award.

- Cost and quality data combined gives patients the information they need to ask good questions and make good decisions.

For Researchers and Policymakers: The Analytic Enclave

- Big innovation needs solid research. The WA-APCD's data-release program is available to researchers, payers, health care providers, employers and state agencies.

- The state's Department of Health, Health Benefit Exchange, Health Care Authority, all nine Accountable Communities of Health, and others data users are already using the data to work on diabetes, opioids, Medicaid costs and health equity and more.

- Improvement is constant. Onpoint and the state's Office of Financial Management are building on their successful framework to expand the usefulness of the WA-APCD.

The database has:

- More than 100 million individual medical services and their costs are added every year

- Medical, pharmacy and dental services claims and eligibility data

- Information on almost 5 million Washington residents

- Data from more than 55 data suppliers

WA-APCD Frequently Asked Questions

How do you know if the data is correct?

The WA-APCD's data vendor, Onpoint Health Data, has an extensive data validation process that includes:

- Submitter attestation: Every organization that submits data must review their own data on a quarterly basis.

- Internal checks: Based on Onpoint's extensive knowledge of databases like this, they perform regular assessmmts to ensure the data checks out against more than 2,000 data quality validations and associated benchmarks.

- Cross-payer validation: Once individual payers submit data, the consolidated data is reviewed for consistency.

- Quality, utilization and expenditure metrics: Independent measures-coding experts also review the data to ensure it's meeting Onpoint's quality measures. Those measures are continually strengthened by the work Onpoint does with clients across the country.

- Review and Reconsideration: The health care providers also are able to verify their quality, utilization, and expenditure measures before the data is released to the public.

We are constantly reviewing and updating the information in the database, and both the data and the data-review processes are constantly improving.

Who uses the data?

The public, for starters. www.WAHealthCareCompare.com provides two important services: First, it gives average cost information so patients know what to expect from more than 80 services. Second, it has a tool that, when the user adds information about their own insurance plan, can give an estimate of the amount they may pay.

The other large groups of data users are researchers and policymakers. They access a bigger set of data to tackle bigger issues such as cost, diabetes, opioid prescribing measures, surprise billing, drug cost transparency and more.

Although indirectly, the public benefits from their use of the data when the health system is improved.

Can the public download the data from the WA-APCD?

No, for a few reasons. First, the shear amount of the data is overwhelming! The billing and health information for millions of people is more than most home computers could handle.

Second, the data is extremely complex. An APCD is a custom-built database that stores complex data in specialized ways. Unlike a simple spreadsheet that can be used in different programs, data from an APCD can't be easily moved. Researchers access the data through a special portal that creates custom reports, and even the companies who submit data (like insurance companies) use special software tools.

Third, personal medical information is very protected. There are a lot of special requirements that affect databases like this to ensure people's health information is private.

Ensuring that this data is right and safe takes a huge amount of effort, and there is constant training happening for all the people who interact with the data.

Who gives input on how the database works?

This could not be done well without an intense amount of collaboration from stakeholders across the state. Data clients, analysts, payers and providers from more than a dozen state agencies and other health care organizations advise on data policy, quality measures, the release of the data and other issues.

Who funds the database?

The WA-APCD was developed with grant money. However, the WA-APCD must ultimately generate revenue to support ongoing operations and maintenance as required by the Legislature. In the long-run, the state will likely have to consider whether it's sustainable to expect private funds to support a service that is so heavily used by state and public health agencies.