



## Alliance for Better Health Care

October 25, 2005

The Honorable Bill Frist  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-230 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20510-7010

Dear Mr. Leader:

We are writing to express our appreciation for your continued leadership on funding comparative clinical effectiveness research authorized by the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003. This important research was initiated this year by the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (AHRQ). We also want to urge you to support the Appropriations Committee-passed amount of \$20 million for this research for Fiscal Year 2006.

With the funds made available by the Congress for FY 2005, AHRQ is conducting 10 important studies comparing the clinical effectiveness of alternative treatments for the same condition. The research areas chosen by the Department of Health and Human Services are among the most important areas in medicine affecting large segments of the American population, especially the elderly. They include treatments for peptic ulcer disease, high blood pressure, depression, arthritis, diabetes, cancer and other medical conditions. By combining and synthesizing the results of existing empirical studies, but excluding studies that do not meet standards of methodological rigor, in many cases it will be possible to identify treatments that are more likely to be effective for specific types of patients as well as identify those therapies that reduce the risk of adverse outcomes. Physicians, pharmacists and other practitioners will be able to use these findings to improve care for their patients. As some syntheses will be inconclusive, an important product of the research will be identification of knowledge gaps and suggestions for approaches to fill those gaps.

The returns from comparative clinical effectiveness research are not just promises; they are real. The work that AHRQ is sponsoring this year will improve care for many Americans. Similarly, comparative clinical trials occasionally sponsored by the National Institutes of Health improve the applied science base of medicine to improve care and health. While improved care is the objective of all of these studies, some will also provide a path for payers, including federal health care programs, to lower spending without compromising health care quality. The potential improvement in quality and effectiveness of the Medicare and Medicaid programs and the overall health care system is significant and well worth the \$20 million investment.

