

AHRQ's Tools for Better Practice: Helping Family Physicians Manage Today's Challenges

THEODORE G. GANIATS, MD, and
ARLENE S. BIERMAN, MD, MS, *Agency for
Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville,
Maryland*

Family physicians are dedicated to delivering care that is safe, effective, patient centered, timely, efficient, and equitable. However, primary care clinicians face challenges that create barriers to providing high-quality care.

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,

recognizes that supporting the nation's primary care health system is foundational to achieving high-quality health care. To that end, the agency invests in innovative primary care research to generate new knowledge, synthesize existing evidence that is applicable to the primary care setting, create tools for improving primary care practice, and generate data and measures to track and improve performance in primary care. *Table 1* provides examples of AHRQ tools and resources that are available.

The AHRQ is engaged in the dissemination and widespread implementation of what works in primary care. The agency's main point of contact with the primary care

Table 1. Examples of AHRQ Tools and Resources for Primary Care Practice

Resource	Description	Link
Effective Health Care Program*	Easy-to-read summaries of comparative effectiveness reviews and research reports; selected summaries are published in <i>American Family Physician</i> (http://www.aafp.org/afp/ahrq) Decision aids on topics such as lung cancer screening (with low-dose computed tomography), nonsurgical treatment options for female urinary incontinence, and prostate cancer screening	https://www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov
Electronic Preventive Services Selector	Mobile app and online tool that identifies relevant U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommendations Provides tailored guidance based on patient information that is entered into the interface, such as gender and age	https://epss.ahrq.gov
Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit	Aimed at helping primary care health professionals increase patient understanding of health information and support patients of all health literacy levels Companion guide and crosswalk that show how implementing health literacy tools can help meet standards for patient-centered medical home certification	https://www.ahrq.gov/literacy
National Guideline Clearinghouse†	Searchable database that provides comparative, detailed, objective information on clinical practice guidelines	https://www.ngc.gov
SHARE curriculum	Collection of references, guides, posters, and other resources designed to support implementation of SHARE, a five-step process for shared decision making	http://www.ahrq.gov/shareddecisionmaking

AHRQ = Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; SHARE = seek, help, assess, reach, evaluate.

*—Although the Effective Health Care Program website has many clinical resources, including patient education on selected topics, it will not be creating new patient education content. However, AHRQ will continue to add systematic reviews from its Evidence-Based Practice Centers.

†—The future of the National Guideline Clearinghouse is uncertain, given AHRQ's budget constraints. However, AHRQ is exploring various models of sustainability, including public-private partnerships.

community is the National Center for Excellence in Primary Care Research (NCEPCR). This center communicates evidence derived from research that is important to primary care to researchers, primary care professionals, health care decision makers, patients, and families, and conveys how it can be used to improve health and primary health care.

The NCEPCR website (<https://www.ahrq.gov/ncepcr>) offers a variety of tools and resources designed to address some of the daily challenges facing primary care clinicians. These tools and resources can be used in patient care and to support practice-improvement efforts. They provide ready access to essential evidence for clinical practice, as well as information on a wide range of topics to support care delivery, such as effective models of care (e.g., patient-centered medical home), patient- and family-centered care, shared decision making, quality improvement, and health information technology, including clinical decision support. Some of these resources are straightforward, searchable databases that quickly inform clinicians regarding a specific issue or

concern (e.g., National Guideline Clearinghouse) or can be used for patient education (e.g., summaries from the Effective Health Care Program). Others provide guidance on improving the care of patients who are at risk of suboptimal outcomes (e.g., health literacy toolkit). There are a number of resources that can be used in real time during a patient visit (e.g., the Electronic Preventive Services Selector, which aids clinicians in selecting patient-tailored preventive services). Complete courses that help learners develop competencies in important aspects of primary care (e.g., SHARE [seek, help, assess, reach, evaluate] curriculum) are also available. All of these tools are free.

The AHRQ's NCEPCR is interested in getting your feedback on these tools. We would like to learn more about your needs and hear about other tools and resources that might be helpful for your practice. Please send us your thoughts at NCEPCR@ahrq.hhs.gov.

Address correspondence to Theodore G. Ganiats, MD, at theodore.ganiats@ahrq.hhs.gov. Reprints are not available from the authors.

Author disclosure: No relevant financial affiliations. ■

Code accurately. Optimize your payment.

Check out the AAFP's suite of coding tools available to immediately improve your documentation and payment.

- **New!** Coding Reference Cards: 1995 Basic Evaluation and Management Codes
- 2017 Coding Flash Cards

Don't leave payment on the table.

aafp.org/coding-help

