

October 26, 2010

Gene L. Dodaro, Acting Comptroller
Government Accountability Office (GAO Health Care)
Attention: PCOR Institute Methodology Committee
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

On behalf of the five family medicine organizations, we are writing to nominate three highly qualified family physicians to the Methodology Committee of the Patient-Centered Research Institute: Alfred Berg, MD, MPH; Theodore G. Ganiats, MD; and Eric Wall, MD, MPH. Attached are copies of each candidate's letter of interest. As directed by the notice in the *Federal Register*, we are not sending additional copies of their *curriculum vitae* since the Agency received those in June when you requested candidates for the Board of Governors.

We believe that family physicians should serve on the Methodology Committee because they bring a critical perspective to the design of comparative effectiveness studies for a number of reasons. Family physicians have a comprehensive and continuing relationship with their patients. We also see complex patients with multiple morbidities for whom a "one size fits all" approach is not effective. Finally, family physicians participate in practice-based research networks that provide data and allow them to share information on best practices.

Nearly one in four of all office visits are conducted by family doctors. That is 208 million office visits each year – nearly 83 million more than the next largest medical specialty. Today, family physicians provide more care for America's underserved and rural populations than any other medical specialty.

In our increasingly fragmented world of health care, family physicians are dedicated to treating the whole person, across the full spectrum of conditions, setting and ages. As a result, having a family physician on this Committee assures it will seek data that will impact patients over their lifetimes, as their health profiles and life circumstances change.

As specialists in primary care, family physicians understand how difficult it is to use research to determine the best response to a complex patient with several comorbidities. It is enormously easier to compare X against Y if no other variables are present. Unfortunately, family physicians frequently encounter more complicated patients in their practices. Including a family physician on the Methodology Committee will inject this perspective into the design of these studies.

Family physicians currently are performing research in collaboration with hundreds of other primary care physicians. For example, through the Distributed Ambulatory Research in Therapeutics Network (DARTNet), we are seeking to improve the quality and safety of medical care by collecting and sharing clinical data and best practices. The goal of the project is to show that networks of practice-based research must be

used in tandem with traditional clinical trials. This program uses electronic health records, practice-based research networks and practical clinical trials to advance comparative effectiveness research. This form of research design also must be considered by the Methodology Committee and our candidates will be able to provide it.

We understand that the specific qualifications for the Methodology Committee are different from those of the Board of Governors. Our candidates are experts in the fields required for the Methodology Committee, as noted below.

Alfred Berg, MD, MPH

Dr. Berg has served on numerous national expert panels relevant to the Methodology Committee, including chairing the US Preventive Services Task Force; co-chairing the *otitis media* panel set up by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); as a member of the AMA/CDC panel writing Guidelines for Adolescent Preventive Services; as a member of the Institute of Medicine's (IOM)'s Immunization Safety Review Committee; as chair of the IOM's Committee on Treatment of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and chair of the NIH State-of-the-Science Conference on Family History and Improving Health. He also chairs the CDC panel on Evaluation of Genomic Applications in Practice and Prevention and the IOM's Committee on Standards for Systematic Review of Clinical Effectiveness Research.

Theodore G. Ganiats, MD

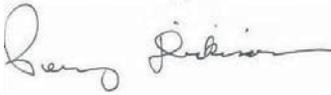
Dr. Ganiats is a clinician, health researcher and teacher. His relevant experience includes research that has focused on quality of life assessment and cost-effectiveness. In addition, Dr. Ganiats has served on more than 40 national systematic review and quality improvement panels. His work has included establishing objective research agendas (e.g., AHRQ Evidence-based Practice Centers and CDC's Evaluation of Genomic Applications in Practice and Prevention). He has worked on developing research methodological standards (the "Gold Book,") and solicited and organized public input by his work on the Harvard Institute for Clinical and Economic Review. Dr. Ganiats has been involved in the dissemination of information to healthcare providers by teaching in numerous settings, including masters-level courses to non-academic/non-clinicians.

Eric Wall, MD, MPH

Dr. Wall recently completed a two-year appointment to the Stakeholder Group for AHRQ's Effective Health Care Program and served as the first Research Director for the Department of Family Medicine at the Oregon Health and Science Research University. Dr. Wall also has served as a member of numerous AHRQ Technical Evaluation Panels and was co-chair of the Clinical Practice Guideline Panel on the Management of Chronic Headache at the agency. He has nearly 30 years of experience in critical appraisal, practice guideline development and implementation and multidisciplinary research collaboration.

We believe that the specific qualifications of these family physicians, along with their understanding of the complexity of family medicine practice and patients, make them eminently qualified for the Methodology Committee. On behalf of the five family medicine organizations, thank you for your consideration of these individuals.

Sincerely,



W. Perry Dickinson, MD,
President
Society of Teachers of
Family Medicine



Joseph Gravel, MD
President
Association of Family
Medicine
Residency Directors



Richard Wender, MD
President
Association of
Departments of
Family Medicine



Roland A. Goertz, MD,
MBA
President
American Academy of
Family Physicians



Jeannie Haggerty, PhD
President
North American Primary
Care
Research Group