

10

THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE QUALITY OF HEALTH CARE IN AMERICA

1

CARE VARIES.

Geography can be destiny. Across the United States, there are striking variations in the care doctors provide. These differences affect both the quality and the quantity of care you receive.

2

MORE IS NOT BETTER.

Patients in some areas of the country receive more care—through hospital stays, doctors' visits, imaging and tests—but don't end up any healthier. Researchers estimate that 30 percent of health care spending—about \$750 billion—is for services that may not improve people's health.

3

IT'S A COIN TOSS.

When Americans go to the doctor, it's essentially a coin toss whether they will get the care experts recommend for specific conditions. Adults get the recommended care 55 percent of the time, and children get it 46.5 percent of the time.

4

MISTAKES HAPPEN.

Preventable medical errors kill as many as 98,000 Americans each year. They are the eighth-most-common cause of death in this country.

5

WE GET WHAT WE PAY FOR.

We still have a system that pays doctors and hospitals for doing things—like procedures or tests—rather than for doing the right things, like preventing illness and injury.

6

WE KNOW WHAT WORKS.

Across the country, changes that improve the quality of care are beginning to take hold, such as new rules and checklists to prevent patients in hospitals from getting infections, making sure heart attack patients get the right medications when they arrive in the emergency room, and using technology to remind diabetes patients to get tests and checkups.

7

IT'S ABOUT EQUALITY.

Addressing differences in care is part of the quality equation. Racial and ethnic minorities suffer from worse health and receive lower-quality care than whites—regardless of where they live, their income or their health insurance coverage.

8

TECHNOLOGY FUELS CHANGE.

Doctors, nurses and hospitals are using health information technology to help coordinate and improve care among your different health care providers. This way, you don't have to keep repeating your medical history, and they all know which tests and care you've already received.

9

FINDING THE RIGHT FIT IS KEY

More information about the quality of health care is available than ever before. There are differences among health care providers. Finding the right doctor for you could mean better health. You can find out more about doctors and hospitals in your community by visiting websites that report on the quality of care.

10

YOU PLAY A ROLE.

Health care providers, the government and many other groups are working hard to improve health care quality, but you can make a difference, too. When you seek good care, you play an important role in improving health care quality. Patients get better outcomes when they make informed choices, become partners to their doctors and nurses in their own care, and follow recommendations.