



2625 Butterfield Road, Suite 102E
Oak Brook, Illinois 60523-1234
(800) 386-6431
Fax (630) 571-5611

Media Contact:

Lara R. Jackson
(630) 928-5869
ljackson@ilqio.sdps.org

**Illinois Foundation for Quality Health Care's Practice Cultural Quality Program
Increases Multicultural Awareness**

OAK BROOK, Ill., October 10, 2007 – Between 1995 and 2025, Illinois will gain one million residents through international migration, according to U.S. Census Bureau projections. Illinois' Hispanic population is the fastest-growing minority population – it is expected to increase from 35 million in 2000 to 55 million in 2030. Because cultural and language differences can impact the quality of health care people receive, the increase of the minority population will impact health care quality in Illinois.

Cultural competency in health care is defined as the ability to provide care to patients with diverse values, beliefs and behaviors. Cultural competency may require modifying the delivery of care to meet social, cultural and linguistic needs. Evidence supports a connection between health outcomes and cultural competency with a clear impact on patient satisfaction and compliance with treatment instructions.

“Cultural competency is a process – it’s not going to happen overnight. The guidelines are helpful for physicians and practioners to gain a better grasp of methods that work with a multicultural population and make ourselves more accessible,” stated Assistant Professor Raj C. Shah, M.D. of Rush Alzheimer’s Disease Center in Chicago, “For example, since we are located near Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood, which is highly Hispanic, we have hired staff who speak Spanish, offer more literature in Spanish and have recorded our telephone greeting in English and Spanish.”

As the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) for Illinois, the Illinois Foundation for Quality Health Care (IFQHC) developed the Practice Cultural Quality program to educate primary care providers and staff on the Cultural Quality program and the adoption of the Cultural & Linguistically Appropriate

-more-

Services (CLAS) Standards. The CLAS Standards, a part of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Cultural Quality program, are divided into three themes: culturally competent care, language access services and organizational support for cultural competence. CLAS focuses on reducing health care disparities and improving patient safety and outcomes.

In order for physician offices to achieve the program objectives, they must complete the Office of Minority Health's Web-based *A Physician's Guide to Culturally Competent Care* Modules available at www.thinkculturalhealth.org. The American Medical Association (AMA), the American Academy of Family Physicians and the College of Physicians endorse the modules that provide up to 9.0 hours of Category 1 AMA credits at no cost.

"The modules emphasized many of the concepts we have already started to implement at our facility. But, we did learn some new ideas by completing the modules and have adapted some of these concepts," stated Annabelle Lasala, administrator at Chicago Hamlin Medical Center in Chicago.

IFQHC Lead Provider Liaison Stacey Tiele explains, "With Illinois becoming more culturally diverse, it is important for physicians to communicate with their patients and offer them the best care possible."

###

Located in Oak Brook, Ill., IFQHC is the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) for the state of Illinois. QIOs work with physicians and health care professionals to promote high quality medical care for Medicare beneficiaries. IFQHC is contracted by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to perform designated quality improvement activities with healthcare providers across Illinois. For more information on IFQHC, visit our Web site at www.ifqhc.org.