



## Guest Column: Health Care Reform turns focus to prevention

By Mary Beth McDonald • October 7, 2010

Editor's note: This is the fourth in a series of guest columns discussing the [health](#) care reform act.



The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act includes many provisions focusing on prevention and wellness. Under the new law:

- Copayments for certain preventive services recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force will be eliminated. These include recommended immunizations, preventive care for children and preventive care and screenings for women.
- Employers will receive incentives to create wellness programs for employees.
- Medicare recipients will have access to a comprehensive health risk assessment and personalized prevention plan.
- A National Prevention, Health Promotion and Public Health Council will be established to define and coordinate federal prevention, wellness and public health initiatives.

These and other provisions aim to increase access to and use of preventive services through commercial [insurance coverage](#), employer wellness plans or community-based programs. Health reform is expected to provide coverage to nearly 34 million previously uninsured Americans.

Individuals will have increased access to wellness and preventive care, such as cancer screenings. Children will have better access to immunizations. Diabetics will have access

to regular monitoring. Physicians will emphasize smoking cessation to their patients. These provisions are expected to make for a healthier population, with fewer hospitalizations down the road.

Providers throughout the state of Wisconsin practice this type of health management every day. For example, many physicians participate in the Wisconsin Collaborative for Healthcare Quality ([www.wchq.org](http://www.wchq.org)), which develops [health care](#) performance measures and publicly reports results such as adult screening for tobacco use and some vaccinations. It has received national attention for its work.

Also, the National Committee on Quality Assurance ([recognition.ncqa.org](http://recognition.ncqa.org)) focuses on quality health care standards and provides recognition for physicians in areas such as diabetes management and the patient-centered medical [home](#). Hundreds of physicians across Wisconsin already have received recognition for their efforts.

[Health care reform](#) provides more access to wellness programs and preventive care, which will increase opportunities for Americans to manage and improve their health. What the new law cannot do, however, is guarantee individuals will make the right choices and "do what the doctor says." In next week's column, we will discuss how provisions in the act will help individuals make the right choices to improve their health.

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