



PPO Action Plan: For Improving Hysterectomy Quality

What: There are 600,000 hysterectomies performed in the US each year, the majority for benign conditions. 60-70% of hysterectomies are done through open abdominal surgery.

The Issue: Gynecologic surgeons recommend that for benign conditions, minimally invasive surgery (vaginal, laparoscopically assisted vaginal or laparoscopic) is the approach of choice. Compared to open abdominal surgery, minimally invasive procedures (MIP) have:

- Lower rates of infection and major complications
- Shorter hospital stays
- Less pain and less major bleeding

The Opportunity for PPOs: One study concluded that if physicians used evidence-based treatment guidelines to assist decisions about route of hysterectomy, they would perform minimally invasive procedures in 90% of cases. **This is a potential savings of \$1,184,000 for every 1000 hysterectomies, would free up 1020 patient-bed days and reduce complications by approximately 20%.**

Action Needed: PPOs' first oversight responsibility is to assure that hysterectomies are being carried out for appropriate indications. The second responsibility is to assure that patients who do have hysterectomies receive quality surgical care consistent with guidelines. PPOs can:

- Contract preferentially with surgeons skilled in minimally invasive procedures
- Identify MIP practitioners in the network and highlight their availability in the physician directory and other member communications
- Provide information and shared decision-making tools for women to improve understanding of surgical options
- Educate primary care practitioners on MIP to improve referral networks
- Use medical policy and medical management programs *including preauthorization* to promote minimally invasive over open hysterectomy
- Provide incentives or financial rewards to physicians for performing minimally invasive procedures
- Drive surgical efficiencies at hospitals and surgery centers to bring down the cost of minimally invasive surgery
- Talk with payer-customers about benefit incentives or differentials to promote less invasive surgeries
- Offer incentives for surgeons to seek training and improve skills (including obtaining certification), and for performing the majority of procedures using minimally invasive techniques
- Collaborate with physician specialty and quality organizations to promote physician quality designations that can be used by PPOs for selective contracting.
- Support advertising by hospitals or outpatient facilities that perform a majority of procedures minimally invasively and that have exemplary quality metrics.

Increased demand for minimally invasive surgery will increase availability of qualified surgeons and facilities to support delivery of evidence based care for women.

Visit AAPPO's Improving Women's Health website at: http://www.aappo.org/AAPPO_WOMENS_HEALTH/WH_01.cfm
For links to guidelines, evidence, and quality websites

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