

Bridges to Excellence Overview

Bridges to Excellence (BTE) was developed by employers, physicians, health care services researchers and other industry experts with a simple mission: to create significant leaps in the quality of care by recognizing and rewarding health care providers who demonstrate that they have implemented comprehensive solutions in the management of patients and deliver safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable and patient-centered care.

The mission is accomplished by paying bonuses to physicians that meet standardized expert-based performance measures. Each measurement set was either developed or co-developed by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) and panels of experts. BTE also includes an optional patient component that provides support tools and an incentive model for patients in order to align patient behavior changes with physician standards of care.

BTE is continuing to expand to include new purchasers and new markets. New purchasers who are interested in participating in Bridges to Excellence can either join current purchasers who already are participating in BTE in an existing market, or identify other purchasers in a new market area who also are interested in participating in Bridges to Excellence.

Bridges to Excellence is currently active in the following market areas: **Cincinnati/Louisville (DCL), Massachusetts/Eastern New York (POL, DCL, CCL).**

Guiding Principles

1. BTE encourages all market solutions that will help physicians and their practices improve the effectiveness and efficiency with which they deliver medical care;
2. Physicians, as free agents in the market, are encouraged to assess the relative value of available solutions that will enable them to increase their performance and receive the financial rewards offered by BTE Participants;
3. BTE will not endorse any product or service offered as solutions to improve provider efficiency and effectiveness. However, BTE will actively share the learnings from physicians that have been able to achieve higher performance as examples for other physicians to copy;
4. BTE encourages educational activities that will help physicians and their practices to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of care and supports an educational activity that will specifically show physicians how they can increase their performance and qualify for the financial rewards offered by BTE Participants;
5. However, BTE will not co-sponsor or in any other way endorse these educational activities unless they are offered by not-for-profit organizations whose primary mission is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of care services, or by health plans. BTE won't accept money from these organizations and they need to seek permission to use the BTE logo.

How Much Can YOU Earn?

Each of the three BTE programs has its own performance assessment and rewards criteria. Performance assessment is administered by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). Rewards are administered through Bridges to Excellence, with a maximum per-physician reward across all BTE programs of \$20,000 per year and \$50,000 over the life of the initiative.

***Note: rewards only available in current market regions*

Bridges to Excellence and NCQA Recognition Programs

The Bridges to Excellence (BTE) initiative is comprised of three individual programs, each of which is designed to promote and reward improvements in the quality of patient care:

Physician Office Link (POL): The POL program is designed to promote and reward office practices for the use of systematic information to enhance the quality of patient care.

- Office practice sites which implement specific processes to reduce errors and increase quality can earn up to \$50 per year for each eligible patient covered by a participating employer.
- 3-year recognition in NCQA's Physician Practice Connections (PPC) program is required to obtain rewards through POL

Diabetes Care Link (DCL): The DCL program is intended to improve the quality of care for patients with diabetes.

- Patients who use disease management tools to self-manage their own diabetes care can earn rewards for achieving target goals that improve their health.
- 3-year recognition in NCQA's Diabetes Physician Recognition Program (DPRP) is required to obtain rewards through DCL

Cardiac Care Link (CCL): The CCL program is focused on improving the quality of care for patients with cardiovascular disease.

- Patients who use disease management tools to self-manage their own cardiac care can earn rewards for achieving target goals that improve their health.
- 3-year recognition in NCQA's Heart/Stroke Recognition Program (HSRP) is required to obtain rewards through CCL

***Note: rewards only available in current market regions*

Consumer Programs

The Diabetes Care Link Program includes a web-based disease management tool for patients with diabetes to use to help manage their own condition. Employers may choose to provide rewards to patients who meet target health goals. The data provided by the health plans to BTE's General Contractor is used to determine the diabetic patients of participating employers who will be contacted regarding the disease management tool and patient rewards available through BTE.

- **Disease Management Tools.** BTE offers a diabetes disease management tool through the CareRewards vendor. Alternatively, employers may elect to use a diabetes disease management tool already available through a disease management vendor with which they or their health plan contracts. BTE does not offer or endorse any specific disease management tools beyond the BTE Diabetes CareRewards program.
- **Patient Rewards.** Patients who achieve certain thresholds in their own self-care (e.g., improved blood glucose levels) are eligible for rewards offered by the participating employers. Employers choose whether to provide rewards to employees. The BTE CareRewards vendor manages a web-based system for patients to obtain points for achieving health care goals to redeem those bonus points for rewards.

The Physician Office Link Program includes a web-based tool for patients to view high-level roll-up of the physician's overall performance ratings and to rate their experience of care. All employees are encouraged to review the performance ratings of the physicians and to use those objective and subjective ratings in selecting a doctor.

Current State of Bridges to Excellence

New employer additions AstraZeneca and IBM bring the total of participating employers to 15 and 300,000 covered lives, and add to the continued success to the program. Physician participation in the NCQA recognition programs and Bridges to Excellence has increased into the hundreds, with almost \$1 million in rewards paid, and the momentum continues to build. Recently BTE has introduced the Cardiac Care Link product to the Boston area. In 2005, expansion plans include working with national coalitions to increase Bridges to Excellence participation. Also with the addition of 2 new licensees to BTE, exponential new market growth is on the horizon.

Quick Links & References

- Bridges to Excellence website:
<http://www.bridgestoexcellence.org>
- NCQA website:
<http://www.ncqa.org>