Health care improvements fail to keep pace with costs

An annual report by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) shows that health care is improving in the U.S., but not among all segments of the population or as quickly as costs are rising. AHRQ says the quality of health care improved by an average rate of 2.5 percent per year between 1994 and 2005, however the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services estimate health care costs rose by a 6.7 percent average annual rate during those years.

“Health care quality is improving only modestly, at best,” cautioned AHRQ Director Carolyn M. Clancy, M.D. “Given that health care spending is rising much faster, these findings about quality underscore the urgency to improve the value Americans are getting for their health care dollars.”

A lack of health insurance appears to affect health care significantly. Only 18 percent of people without insurance went to a dentist at least once during the previous year, compared to 51 percent of people who had insurance. Racial disparities persist but are narrowing. Although Hispanics remain more likely than Whites to get delayed care or no care at all for an illness, that gap decreased between 2001-2003 and 2004-2005. Black children between 19 and 35 months old remain less likely than white children to receive all recommended vaccines, but that disparity remains more likely than Whites to get delayed care or no care at all for treatment. The Clinic expects to assist around 5,200 patients this year. The Eric B. Chandler Health Center will use the money to continue offering comprehensive dentistry, including preventive, restorative and curative care for all ages.

“The JFK Medical Center Dental Clinic and the Eric B. Chandler Health Center have catered to the needs of the underserved for years,” said Diane Belle, vice president, Delta Dental of New Jersey Foundation. “We have chosen these clinics because we feel confident they will use the grants to make good dental care available to those in need.”

JFK’s dental clinic serves a large population of underserved and indigent people, mainly from the central New Jersey counties of Middlesex, Union and Somerset. Located in Edison, the clinic provides restorative and preventive dentistry as well as endodontics, periodontics and oral surgical services.

The Eric B. Chandler Health Center, operated by UMDNJ/Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and the Eric B. Chandler Community Board, is a comprehensive, family-oriented community health center dedicated to the provision of ambulatory care services to low-income and medically indigent residents of the Greater New Brunswick community.

Source: Delta Dental of New Jersey Foundation