Dental Quality Alliance approves initial set of performance measures

First up: Childhood caries prevention, management

The Dental Quality Alliance (DQA), comprising multiple stakeholders from across the oral health community, has released its first set of performance measures for oral health care, “Dental Caries in Children: Prevention and Disease Management.”

The set includes 10 tested and validated performance measures in oral health care: use of services; preventive services; treatment services; oral evaluation; topical fluoride intensity; sealant use in 6-9 years; sealant use in 10-14 years; care continuity; usual source of services; and per-member per-month cost.

The DQA was established by the American Dental Association to develop performance measures for oral health care. “Since its formation in 2008, the DQA has worked tirelessly at developing these consensus-based quality measures,” said Dr. David May, chairman of the ADA Council on Dental Benefit Programs.

The DQA collaborated with the University of Florida Institute for Child Health Policy to evaluate and test the feasibility, validity, reliability and usability of each measure before issuing final approval. The data used to craft the measures came from the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration, Florida Healthy Kids Corporation, Texas Health and Human Services Commission and DentAquest.

The testing was, in part, funded through a grant from the American Dental Association Foundation.

“The ADA Foundation is very proud to be part of this significant effort to develop the first fully validated set of performance measures for dentistry,” said Dr. David Whiston, ADA Foundation president. “We believe it is consistent with our mission to help advance the quality of care for the good of patients.”

“As the only comprehensive multi-stakeholder collaborative,” May said, “the DQA is well-positioned to coordinate and lead in measure development in dentistry through its members’ experience, expertise and support.”

To learn more about the DQA, visit www.ada.org.

(Sources: American Dental Association and the ADA Foundation)
The UCLA School of Dentistry is receiving $5 million in funding from the National Institutes for Health for its study of biological markers in saliva to attempt to develop a tool for detecting stomach cancer.

According to the school, the study has the potential to create a new paradigm in the emerging field of salivary diagnostics, and it could supply conclusive evidence that saliva can be used in the detection of life-threatening diseases, including diabetes and cancers of the pancreas, breasts, ovaries and stomach.

Long term, researchers suggest, a likely location for routine collection of such salivary samples is the dentist’s office.

The funding comes from the NIH Common Fund, a program established to overcome obstacles in biomedical research that have hindered scientific discovery and its translation into improved human health. The money awarded to the school of dentistry comes from the fund’s extracellular RNA communication initiative, which has awarded leading research institutes around the world a total of $160 million to address the transformative potential of salivary diagnostics.

(Sources: UCLA School of Dentistry and the National Institutes for Health)