



A Call to Action: It's Time to Provide the Right Care for African Americans with Heart Disease

Thousands of African Americans with heart disease die needlessly every year due to the nation's failure to treat them to the acknowledged standard of care. But if the National Quality Forum (NQF) adopts recent recommendations to embrace a proven clinical quality measure, many lives will be saved.

BACKGROUND

Published studies estimate that there are over 150,000 African Americans living with Heart Failure (HF) for whom there is an FDA-approved drug that has been proven to reduce mortality in blacks by 43% and first-time hospitalizations for HF by 38%. Astonishingly, only 7% (or 11,000) of African Americans who are clinically eligible for the therapy are receiving it today. As a consequence, it is estimated that 6,655 blacks die prematurely every year because they are not receiving or adhering to standard of care. A primary reason for the lack of adherence to the FDA-approved standard of care is the lack of acknowledgement by the National Quality Forum in the form of a quality measure.

The National Minority Quality Forum (NMQF), the Association of Black Cardiologists (ABC), and other stakeholders have joined forces to pursue the adoption of a National Quality Forum clinical quality measure to improve care for African Americans with HF. Specifically, in response to a recent solicitation from the National Quality Forum for cardiovascular measures, the NMQF submitted to National Quality Forum a proposed measure to require fixed-dose hydralazine and isosorbide dinitrate for self-identified Black or African American patients with HF – the benefits of which have been [published](#) in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and other peer-reviewed sources. Moreover, this proposal is based on an American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association [guideline](#) calling for this specific treatment protocol.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ARE WELCOMED BY THE NATIONAL QUALITY FORUM

NMQF's proposed quality measure will be subject to a pre-meeting comment period that began on July 23, 2015, in which stakeholders can weigh in with the National Quality Forum as to whether the issue merits further consideration. **The National Quality Forum's comment deadline is August 12.**

An endorsement from the National Quality Forum is considered the gold standard for healthcare quality, and implies that measures are evidence-based, valid, and can help patients achieve better outcomes. This proposed measure overwhelmingly meets all three standards, and a formal endorsement by the National Quality Forum is essential in facilitating widespread adoption of this treatment, including by the Medicare program.