

Making Health Care Measurable

By Stacy Lawrence, *Ziff Davis*, March 21, 2006

In an effort to make baseline health care quality statistics more widely available to health care facilities, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, a division of the Department of Health and Human Services, recently launched an interactive online tool.

The new State Snapshot Web tool (<http://www.qualitytools.ahrq.gov/qualityreport/2005/state>) is based on the 2005 National Healthcare Quality Report and the 2005 National Healthcare Disparities Report, both originally released in January, and provides access to the many state measures.

The National Healthcare Quality Report, developed by AHRQ, is the first national comprehensive effort to measure the quality of health care in America.

"We developed the new State Snapshot tool because it is important for states and other health care policymakers to know how their state is doing in providing care," said AHRQ Director Carolyn M. Clancy.

"The need to improve quality of care for all Americans continues to be great, and this tool can help states target their very significant quality improvement efforts," she said.

The State Snapshot tool provides information on a variety of variables for each individual state, including:

- A ranking of 15 representative measures of state health care quality.
- Summary measures of the quality of types of care for each state.
- Comparisons of each state's summary measures to regional and national performance.
- Performance meters that show a state's performance relative to the region or nation.
- Data tables for each state's summary measures that show the NHQR detailed measures and numbers behind the performance meters.

Also, the State Snapshot tool features a special focus on each state's performance in the treatment of diabetes across three areas: quality of care, disparities in treatment, and cost savings potentially accrued with better disease management.

AHRQ will partner with four states in 2006 to develop a complementary guide to the State Snapshot Web tool that will help states use the information from the tool for priority setting and quality improvement.