



FTC Announces Two Public Workshops and Roundtables on Emerging Health Care Competition and Consumer Issues

On September 3, 2008, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) announced two workshops regarding emerging health care competition and consumer issues. These workshops are part of an ongoing series of public forums sponsored by the FTC on health care issues. The most recent occurred on May 29, 2008 and addressed clinical integration issues. One of the workshops will address the role of quality of care information in health care competition.

The role of quality information in health care has been hotly debated. In no other industry does quality play such an important role. However, health care is one industry where little information is available to consumers. As a precursor to the workshops, the FTC has requested comments on a variety of topics. Some of those questions are summarized here:

- What is the role of quality information in the decision-making process, and when do consumers make their decisions?
- What quality information is the most competitively significant for different types of purchasers, and should the information vary based upon medical condition?
- What information is needed to measure the efficiency of a provider? What is the proper weighting of quality and resource use in an efficiency measure?
- How broad a range of differences in quality among health care providers and services is needed to motivate purchasers to switch service providers?
- Should regional variations be accounted for in showing the results of quality measures?
- What barriers--clinical, marketplace, regulatory, or other--restrict the measurement, collection, and reporting of health care quality information? Can health care quality be measured such that it is of value to purchasers in their decision making? Should such measures take into account organizational variation on the provider side (e.g., solo physician practitioners, small physician groups, integrated physician groups, etc.)?
- Do providers and insurers have business reasons to develop and implement public reporting of quality measures?
- What is the relationship between payment reform and the development of quality measures?
- What is the government's role in the development of quality measures, including the dissemination of that information to consumers?

Although the dates for the workshops have not yet been announced, comments are due on September 30, 2008. To the extent that hospital clients are interested in commenting on any of these issues, Post & Schell would be happy to assist in this process to avoid duplication of effort and to reduce client costs in preparing formal comments.

Please contact Mark Mattioli at 215-587-1087 (mmattioli@postschell.com) or Edward Shay at 215-587-1151 (eshay@postschell.com) if you are interested in submitting comments or would like additional information.

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