

# Innovative Models of Dental Care Delivery and Coverage

## Patient-Centric Dental Benefits Based on Digital Oral Health Risk Assessment



John Martin, DDS<sup>a</sup>, Shannon Mills, DDS<sup>b</sup>, Mary E. Foley, MPH, RDH<sup>c,\*</sup>

### KEYWORDS

- Dental care • Dental benefits • Preventive • Risk-based care
- Risk-assessment technology • Cloud-based technology • Patient-centered care
- Evidence-based

### KEY POINTS

- The purpose of innovative models is to align the interests and activities of all stakeholders to provide quality oral health care.
- Quality oral health care is defined and measured by clinical and patient-centric outcomes.
- The models' primary focus of oral health care is to sustain wellness by prevention in contrast to disease-necessitated repair.
- A key element is digital risk and severity assessment, which allow for objective precise measurement of oral health status and outcomes.
- Risk assessment expands on traditional diagnosis and repair by including risk as a modifier of treatment and as a determinant of preventive services.

### DENTAL BENEFITS, EVIDENCE-BASED DENTISTRY, AND HEALTH CARE QUALITY

According to data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, an estimated \$117.5 billion or \$366 per person was spent on dental services in 2015 by individuals, private insurers, and government payers.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, little objective evidence

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Disclosure Statement: Drs J. Martin and S. Mills have a financial interest in the commercial product(s) or service(s) discussed in this article. M.E. Foley, as a representative of the Medicaid Medicare CHIP Services Dental Association, has a financial affiliation with the PreViser Corporation.

<sup>a</sup> PreViser Corporation, 2521 Carnegie Drive, State College, PA 16803, USA; <sup>b</sup> PreViser Corporation, 2 Delta Drive, Suite 302, Concord, NH 03302-2002, USA; <sup>c</sup> Medicaid, Medicare, CHIP Services Dental Association, 4411 Connecticut Avenue NorthWest, Suite 401, Washington, DC 20008, USA

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [Mfoley@medicaidental.org](mailto:Mfoley@medicaidental.org)

Dent Clin N Am 62 (2018) 319–325

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cden.2017.11.009>

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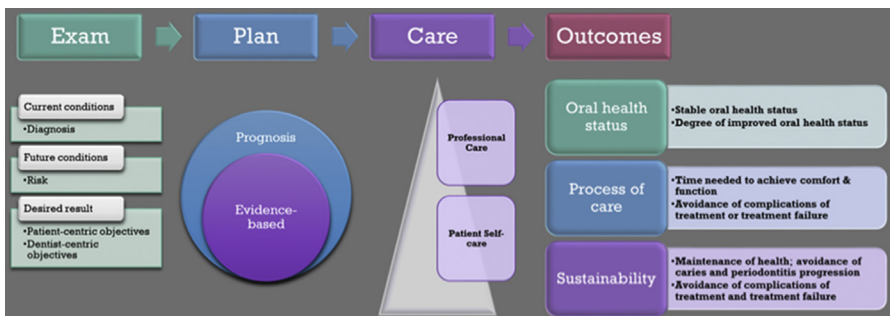
to show that these expenditures resulted in improvements in the oral health of individuals or populations receiving these dental services.<sup>2</sup>

Innovative models of dental care delivery and coverage are being developed to align the interests and activities of patients, purchasers, payers, and providers to provide quality oral health care as defined by the Institute of Medicine, which the authors paraphrase as *“the degree to which (oral) health services increase the likelihood of a patient’s desired outcome and is consistent with current professional knowledge.”*<sup>3</sup> These models expand on the traditional disease, diagnosis, and repair approach by emphasizing the value of risk prediction and prevention. Hence, the models’ primary focus of dental care is to sustain wellness by prevention in contrast to disease-necessitated repair.

Innovative models of dental care delivery and coverage are being developed as a response to the need for evidence-based practice models that use dental quality measures to help dental professionals achieve outcomes desired by their patients.<sup>3-5</sup> Traditional dental quality measures have assessed the process of care, such as access, safety, conformity with guidelines, and technical standards of care, and patient satisfaction with the care experience. Outcomes follow the process of care. Accordingly, the new models incorporate outcomes composed of clinical outcomes and outcomes from the patient’s perspective, such as quality-of-life measures and patient-reported outcomes.

The process of dental care, illustrated in Fig. 1, ends with outcomes, which are the foundational measure of dental care quality.<sup>3,6-8</sup> The value proposition for oral health services can be defined as outcomes relative to costs.<sup>6</sup> Although outcomes themselves have no associated cost, cost affects outcomes by its influence on access to care, the selection and delivery of services, and patient satisfaction with the care experience. Patient satisfaction can also exert a powerful force on outcomes and quality. Elements affecting patient satisfaction with care include the physical environment, dentist-patient-staff interactions, and the patient’s perceived value of objective treatment outcomes.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, cost reduction or increase without consideration of outcomes may adversely affect the value proposition of health care services.

To achieve the best outcomes, new oral health care models will require the use of information technology that aligns the interests of purchasers, patients, third-party



**Fig. 1.** Outcomes are the results of a dental process that begins with an examination of the patient, development of a treatment plan, and care. The examination includes an assessment of current conditions, future conditions, and desired results of care. Evidence-based and prognostic information is used along with the examination assessment to plan treatment. The results of care include outcomes about oral health status, the care process, and status during a follow-on period.

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