

Published: April 20, 2009

Study shows quality of care disparity between residents with public, private health insurance

By: Kaiser Daily Health Policy Report

Low-income and older Minnesota residents who have health insurance through government-sponsored programs do not receive the same standard of care in key categories as patients with private insurance even though they are treated by the same health care providers, but the gap is narrowing, according to a report released Thursday by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* reports.

For the report, MN Community Measurement measured the quality of care for nine common services using recommended standards of care developed by federal and state medical groups. According to the report, the quality-of-care gaps narrowed in the past year for all of the benchmarks except for diabetes care, asthma and chlamydia screening. The largest gap existed for breast cancer screening, with 60% of residents ages 52 to 69 with government-sponsored coverage receiving a mammogram in the previous two years compared with 77% of the privately insured residents.

The study's findings apply to about two-thirds of the 670,000 state residents enrolled in public health insurance programs. According to the report, providing care for low-income and older patients can be more challenging for a number of reasons, including a lack of transportation to receive routine medical care. The report said providers could improve quality by doing more to help patients to get care, such as by establishing same-day appointments for multiple procedures rather than having a patient come back, the *Star Tribune* reports (Yee, Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, 4/16).