

Federal Coordinating Council on Comparative Effectiveness Listening Session

Hubert H. Humphrey Building
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Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this Listening Session. My name is Patricia Adkins and I am the Chief Operating Officer and the Director of Public Policy for the Home Safety Council, a national nonprofit in Washington, DC.

The mission of the Home Safety Council is to help prevent and reduce the deaths and injuries that happen in and around the home such as falls, poisoning, fires and burns, choking and suffocation, and drowning. We are one of many public health and safety nonprofit organizations that focus on injury and violence prevention and response, with the goal of trying to improve the opportunity for all individuals to lead healthy, active, and fulfilling lives.

I believe it is imperative that the Federal Coordinating Council include public health as a priority, with a specific focus on the evidence-based research within the injury and violence prevention and response community, when it makes its recommendations to the President, the Congress and the Federal agencies.

Purpose and Goals of the Federal Coordinating Council

Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the purpose of the Council is to assist the Federal departments and agencies in reducing duplication and encouraging coordination of comparative effectiveness and related health services research, as well as advising the President and Congress on its progress through its initial report which is due on June 30, 2009.

By definition, comparative effectiveness research compares treatments and strategies to improve health. And by knowing what works best, clinicians and patients can decide on the best treatment. Ultimately, this research enables our nation to improve the health of communities and the overall performance of the health system.

The White House Forum on Health Reform

The White House Forum on Health Reform was held on March 5, 2009. The President invited a diverse group of people to participate in this event to begin the process of addressing what he described as “one of the greatest threats not just to the well-being of our families and the prosperity of our businesses, but to the very foundation of our economy – and that is the exploding cost of health care in America today.”

During Breakout Session One at the Forum, the Executive Summary of the discussions highlighted the following: “Nearly every participant stressed the importance of investing in public health prevention...The group agreed that this would both improve health and reduce costs.”

In response to the question, “how can we contain rising health care costs,” one Congressional Member observed, “the model of our system is sick care, not health care.” Other comments centered around “wellness programs that focus on managing

and preventing illness...” and another “noted the importance of public health and prevention.”

Why injury and violence prevention and response are important to the work of the Federal Coordinating Council on Comparative Effectiveness

In 1998, the National Academy of Sciences stated - “Injury is probably the most under-recognized public health threat facing the nation today.”

Each year, injuries resulting from a wide variety of physical and emotional causes – motor vehicle crashes, sports trauma, violence, poisoning, fires and falls – keep millions of children and adults from achieving their goals and making the most of their talents and abilities.

This is some of what we know:

- Nationally and in every state in the United States, injuries are the leading cause of death in the first 44 years of a person’s life.
- In a single year, more than 50 million injuries required medical attention, with an estimated total lifetime cost of \$406 billion.
- This total lifetime cost includes \$80 billion in medical care costs and \$326 billion in productivity losses, including lost wages and benefits and the inability to perform normal household functions.

These three statistics clearly show the consequences of injuries and the major burden on the health care system.

Fortunately, injury research has proven that there are steps that can be taken to prevent injuries and increase the likelihood for full recovery when they do occur. By incorporating these strategies into our communities and everyday activities, we can improve the opportunity for all individuals to lead active, useful, and fulfilling lives.

An Injury Example – Protecting Older Adults

We all want a society where people, including our older citizens, can live to their full potential. A key component of achieving this is helping older adults avoid injuries. There are a variety of actions we can take to prevent injuries and premature death to our parents, grandparents, and friends. Some of the most important include preventing older adults from falling and being injured in fires or motor vehicle crashes.

Let’s focus on one of the injuries that affect the quality of life for older adults – falls. Falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries for those 65 and older. Each year, 1.8 million older adults are treated in emergency departments. Every 35 minutes, an older adult dies from a fall-related injury; and every day 5,000 adults 65 and older are hospitalized due to fall-related injuries.

The cost for treatment is enormous - over \$19 billion annually; and the majority of these expenses are paid for by CMS through Medicare.

While falls are a threat to the health and independence of older adults and can significantly limit their ability to remain self-sufficient, the opportunity to reduce falls

among older adults has never been better. Today there are proven interventions and strategies that can reduce falls and in turn help older adults live better and longer.

Studies show that prescription medications have an effect on balance. A medication review and adjustment is a simple, cost-effective way to prevent a fall. Additionally, older adults who actively participate in physical exercise and receive vision exams are at a lower risk for falling. These evidence-based interventions can help save health care costs and greatly improve the lives of older adults. The costs are small compared to the potential for savings. For every \$1 invested in a comprehensive falls prevention program, it returns a \$9 benefit to society.

How the Council Can Help

The Council can be a catalyst for changing people's perceptions of the value of preventing and responding to injury and violence by helping to create the social and political will to more fully support this public health issue.

Whether it's the lack of knowledge that solutions exist to reduce the impact of injury and violence; or not understanding that injury and violence are public health issues; or believing that unintentional injury is unpredictable and not preventable, the Council can address these challenges and provide a common foundation for collaboration.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides for \$400 million to be allocated at the discretion of the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Incorporating the public health prevention strategies and interventions into the comparative effectiveness research is critical to developing a comprehensive plan for health reform. I urge the Council to reinforce the adoption of these evidence-based public health strategies within the injury and violence prevention and response field to ensure that Americans remain healthy and live their lives to the fullest potential.

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