



## Defining Quality in Physical and Occupational Therapy

The demand for quality healthcare is an unstoppable force. Trends such as pay for performance and quality report cards are gaining momentum as both government and private payers are calling for healthcare providers to demonstrate that treatment produces results.

While hospitals and primary care physicians are increasingly required to meet quality measures, providers in the rehabilitation field—physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech language pathologists—have not had to do so. But that doesn't mean it can't be done.

### What do payers want in a rehab partner?

Health plan executives say they look first and foremost for quality when evaluating various rehabilitation services. But what attributes of those services define quality?

In a recent PTPN survey of health plans, employers and other payers, 100 percent of respondents said quality

control oversight and standard of practice were very important or important in evaluating rehabilitation provider networks.

Those attributes enable a network to ensure that its providers give effective and efficient treatment that matches the patient's needs and produces the desired outcomes. Other factors that were meaningful to respondents included geographic coverage (ease of access to treatment for patients), favorable contracted rates, and credentialing of providers.

### Ingredients for quality and value

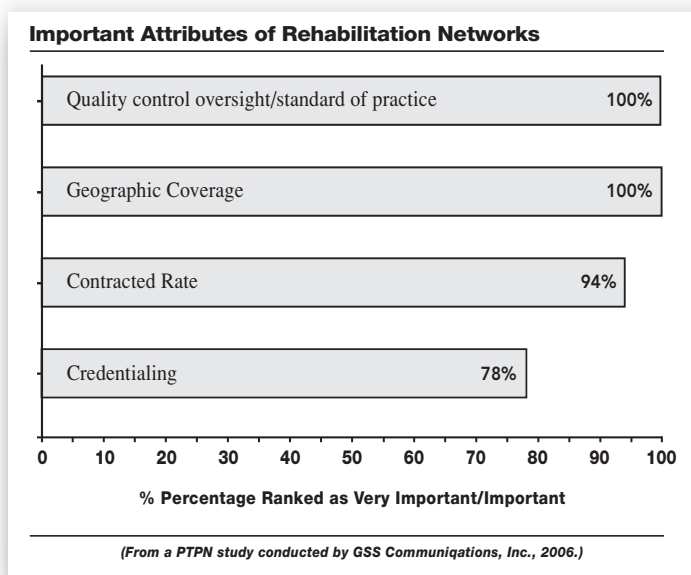
Insurers and employers striving to provide quality rehabilitation services while keeping an eye on the bottom line should consider the following characteristics when sizing up rehab networks.

**Outcomes measurement.** Outcomes data provides payers with a benchmark measure for the overall quality and value of the services offered by rehab providers. It gives objective evidence of improvement in a patient's function and compares providers' performance against national benchmarks. A good outcomes program:

- Measures patients' actual functional improvement over the course of treatment.
- Measures provider efficiency—that is, how much patients improve combined with what resources and time are required.
- Identifies when treatment should change, cease or continue.
- Is conducted by a third party, separate from the network and the provider, to ensure objectivity.
- Compares network and provider results to national averages.

PTPN has launched an unprecedented national outcomes program powered by Focus on Therapeutic

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Outcomes, Inc. (FOTO), one of four tools recommended by the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for rehab providers to document an evaluation. The program allows PTPN, its providers and payers alike to track and quantify the success of treatment offered by PTPN therapists.

**Quality assurance.** A comprehensive quality assurance program should include utilization management, documentation review and patient satisfaction to ensure appropriate treatment and monitor for over-utilization.

An effective quality assurance team continually monitors, evaluates and optimizes health care resource utilization within the network.

**Practice standards.** Therapists should meet strict membership criteria and stringent credentialing requirements and have all relevant licenses, Medicare certification, and continuing education requirements to stay current in their profession.

Providers should be held to the highest quality standards and to credentialing requirements that

exceed state licensing requirements, as well as those required by the NCQA for physicians in managed care plans.

The best credentialing programs are those that include on-site inspections as part of the credentialing and re-credentialing process, to guarantee that professional standards for documentation, equipment, safety, efficiency and staff courtesies are met.

For more information about selecting the right rehab providers and measuring quality, contact Stephen Moore at [smoore@ptpn.com](mailto:smoore@ptpn.com) or 800-766-PTPN, or visit [ptpn.com](http://ptpn.com).

*This information is provided by PTPN, the nation's first and largest outpatient rehabilitation network. All PTPN providers must be independent practitioners who own their own practices. PTPN's network includes more than 1,300 therapist offices throughout the United States.*

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