In less than a decade, Carolinas Rehabilitation’s ground-breaking quality benchmark program has evolved into a trusted resource that’s been proven to improve care at inpatient rehabilitation facilities nationwide.

Started in 2009, EQUADR℠ (Exchanged Quality Data for Rehabilitation) is open to all inpatient rehabilitation facilities (IRFs). Members get access to a confidential database of quality metrics that can be used to benchmark outcomes against peers, as well as share best practices within a protected legal environment.

“EQUADR℠ started off as a handful of rehab hospitals sharing quality data but has since grown into a fully accredited Patient Safety Organization (PSO) with over 30 members,” says Stacey Coffee, Clinical Informatics and PSO Coordinator for EQUADR℠. “Hospitals across the country use the information from EQUADR℠ to improve the quality and safety of the patient care they deliver in their facilities. The information we gather and share helps prevent falls, injuries, pressure ulcers, infections and other serious medical conditions before they happen.”

EQUADR℠, a federally designated PSO, develops quality metrics based on industry best practices, national standards and existing reporting obligations. That PSO designation ensures all data submitted is confidential.

The EQUADR℠ Network

- Is the only rehabilitation-specific Patient Safety Organization in the United States
- Acts as the central database for the collection of inpatient rehabilitation quality and safety metrics. Combines and analyzes data to better understand industry-wide outcomes
- Provides a forum for quality professionals to discuss issues and best practices for inpatient rehabilitation hospitals
- Maintains strict criteria on what type of facilities can join to increase the integrity, validity and reliability of the program
- Provides the confidentiality protections of an Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality-accredited Patient Safety Organization
- Has internet-based electronic submission
- Provides rehab-specific quality/safety benchmarks to drive performance and improve outcomes
Coffee, a certified rehabilitation registered nurse and frequent conference presenter, has also served as a rehabilitation liaison, mentor and clinical instructor. Most recently, she served as Carolinas Rehabilitation’s service line educator.

“EQUADRSM creates a collaborative community where members can learn from one another under the confidentiality protections of an accredited Patient Safety Organization,” says Coffee. “By providing benchmarking data and a forum to share best practices, EQUADRSM equips members to rapidly drive quality improvement efforts in their own facilities.”

In 2012, it became mandatory for IRFs to report quality data, but they’ve since struggled to understand and use the data to improve care. EQUADRSM overcomes that challenge by using the data to develop targeted strategies that have been proven to have the most positive effect on outcomes.

“The data gets used to advance performance efforts and address areas where improvement is needed,” says Coffee. “EQUADRSM members also have access to quarterly webinars, which allow members to share best practices, discuss challenges and interact in the protected environment of an accredited PSO.”

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act strongly incentivizes PSO participation. By 2017, qualified plans in health insurance exchanges may not contract with a hospital of 50 beds or more unless that hospital has a patient safety evaluation system in place and reports data to an accredited PSO.

“EQUADRSM helps us learn about the underlying causes of risks and harms in the delivery of healthcare,” says Coffee. “This process helps other facilities reduce the trial-and-error process, quickly disseminate identified best practices and create a safe zone for hospitals to have these discussions.”

To learn more, or to become a member of EQUADRSM, email us at equadr@CarolinasHealthCare.org.

Rehab Experts Praise EQUADRSM

“The thing that I like most about being a member of EQUADRSM is not only the benchmarking data it provides, but also the webinars where we collectively go over data, share best practice information and have the opportunity to network with each other,” says Don Huston, an administrator with Cone Health Rehabilitation Center in Greensboro. “I have used the EQUADRSM benchmarking data to set outcome goals for our inpatient rehabilitation facility, and we have implemented ideas that have been shared by other EQUADRSM members.”

“Having a safe environment to talk about what’s working and what isn’t working is essential to finding the answers,” says Sarah Lake-Wallace, with TIRR Memorial Hermann in Houston, TX. “All the members are committed to helping us all succeed. [EQUADRSM has] raised some wonderful opportunities for my organization. The quarterly calls keep me current on legislative concerns, process changes and new learning opportunities.”