

October 15, 2010

Ms. Nancy Wilson
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
540 Gaither Road
Room 3216
Rockville, MD 20850

RE: National Health Care Quality Strategy and Plan

Dear Ms. Wilson:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), I am pleased to offer input on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) National Health Care Quality Strategy and Plan. AACOM represents the administrators, faculty, and students of the nation's 26 colleges of osteopathic medicine and three branch campuses that offer the doctor of osteopathic medicine degree. Today, more than 18,000 students are enrolled in osteopathic medical schools. More than 20 percent of new U.S. medical students are training to be osteopathic physicians.

AACOM commends the HHS for seeking public input on this critical plan to promote health care quality and improve patient-centered care. AACOM applauds the HHS in its efforts to create a framework that is guided by a set of "core principles," which AACOM sees as appropriate and timely. Moreover, these principles reflect osteopathic medical education's goals and priorities of enhancing patient-centered primary care.

AACOM appreciates the plan's focus on improving health outcomes for patients and communities and would like to stress the important roles that medical and health professional education play in the success of these efforts. During a time when our nation faces a critical and growing shortage of physicians, particularly in the area of primary care, the relationship between the training of health professionals and the type of health care system in which they will practice should be an important ingredient of the HHS plan. A fundamental aspect of osteopathic medical education stresses the importance of preventive, patient-centered, primary care training for all doctors of osteopathic medicine, regardless of what specialty they intend to select. Although this approach remains sound, osteopathic medical schools and graduate training programs are engaged in innovative efforts to address the additional advancement needed in our health care system to assure quality. Issues such as system-based practice, the integration of information technology, and interprofessional education and practice are all important aspects not only of the health care system that must emerge to address the issues of quality, but also of the environment that needs to be established in medical education

and health professional education to ensure the success of quality initiatives. AACOM requests that HHS support the efforts of our osteopathic medical education institutions and others engaged in health professional education as they innovatively transition their educational systems to train those needed to ensure the success of this important quality initiative.

AACOM remains committed to working in collaboration with others who are seeking to improve the quality of our health care system, including the medical and health professions education communities; the medical profession; and the federal, state, and private sectors. AACOM requests that HHS align its efforts to foster these collaborations. This active engagement will help improve health outcomes and reduce health disparities for our nation's populations, including underserved populations.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input during the development of the National Health Care Quality Strategy and Plan. AACOM looks forward to working with HHS on this plan and other matters of importance to the osteopathic medical education community. If you have questions or require further information, please contact Pamela Murphy, Acting Director of Government Relations, at (301) 968-4151, or pmurphy@aacom.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SC Shannon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Stephen C. Shannon, D.O., M.P.H.
President and CEO