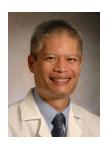
### How to Start: Four Tips for **Improving Equity in U.S. Health Care**

Insights from the Director of Finding Answers



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#### Data

Show health care providers their own clinical performance—breaking down the data by patient race, ethnicity and language. Providers are motivated to address disparities when they see concrete examples in their practices. One study found that 88 percent of physicians believed that racial and ethnic disparities in diabetes care existed. Yet only 40 percent believed that such disparities existed in their own practices. Many more would discover disparities if given better information. Patients' insights can also help draw attention to where the gaps lie.

# Quality

Unite disparities reduction with quality improvement for all. Do not marginalize efforts to reduce disparities as separate efforts from overall quality improvement. Health equity is an integral component of overall quality, and truly high-quality care is impossible when disparities persist. The goal of eliminating disparities will not be achieved through marginalized or standalone efforts; instead, incorporating equity into all facets of quality improvement has the potential to make a difference.

# Interventions

**Implement proven interventions.** Culturally targeted care, health teams who closely monitor patients, and partnerships with families and communities are working. Successful providers use trained lay navigators to help patients move through the health system. They empower patients with interactive skills training, such as helping asthma patients practice how to use an inhaler, rather than simply lecturing.

## Incentives

Create financial incentives for preventive care and attention to social determinants of health, and disincentives for costly hospitalizations and procedures. For example, accountable care organizations (ACOs) are responsible for caring for a population of patients within a defined budget while meeting clinical performance standards. One of the smartest things these ACOs can do is to partner with local groups to help their patients live a healthy lifestyle.

Adapted from "End Health Care Disparities," an article that originally appeared in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* on September 5, 2012.

