On October 11th, CMS released the Medicare 2018 Part C & D Star Rating Technical Notes. This update documents the trends and high-level summary of performance associated with key Part D measures.

The 2018 Star Ratings for Medicare Part C & D plans are displayed on the Medicare Plan Finder found at www.medicare.gov. Medicare beneficiaries, since October 15th, have been able to view these 2018 Star Ratings when selecting their MA-PD or PDP for the 2018 benefit year as part of the Open Enrollment period which will continue through December 7th.

Effective November 15th, Pharmacy Quality Solutions (PQS) will begin displaying the updated 2018 Star Rating thresholds in EQuIPP for the 3, 4, and 5 Star MAPD Thresholds within the Goal drop down menu on the main page. However, most plans, PBMs, and associated programs will continue to maintain customized, programmatic goals which would be detailed in the Quality Improvement Program (QIP) table in addition to any applicable "My Programs" displays.

As partners for improving quality, PQS has provided key highlights from the 2018 Part C & D Star Rating Technical Notes that impact pharmacy-based quality measures. The complete version of the Technical Notes can be found here.

Note: See Appendix I for the 2018 MAPD and PDP thresholds and Appendix II for average performance trends from 2014-2018.

General points from the Medicare 2018 Part C & D Star Rating Technical Notes:

- Approximately 73% of MAPD enrollees and 47% of PDP enrollees are now in a Medicare contract with a rating of 4 or more stars.
- Average Overall MAPD Star Rating remained consistent at 4 Stars and the average PDP Star Rating increased slightly to 3.62 Stars.

Focused updates for medication-related Part D Measures from the Medicare 2018 Part C & D Stars

MTM Program Completion Rate for Comprehensive Medication Review (CMR)
- *Key Takeaways*
    - The average MAPD health plan is now scoring 3.5 stars compared to 2.4 stars in 2017.
    - The average CMR Completion Rate for MAPD improved by over 15% and PDP averages improved by approximately 8% compared to the 2017 Star Rating CMS reported averages.
- *Measure Details*
    - This measures the percent of MTM eligible members that have received a CMR during the measurement period.
    - For 2018, the only change to the measure related to the reporting to a whole number with no decimal.
    - Medicare health plans often use multiple resources (case managers, nurses, external vendors, as well as community pharmacists) to complete CMRs
    - The average CMR completion rates based on 2016 data (used to generate 2018 Star Rates) were:
        - 61% for MAPD plans (i.e. health plans) [up from 45.6% from 2017 Stars]
        - 33% for PDP plans (i.e. prescription drug plans) [up from 25.3% from 2017 Stars]

Medication Adherence Measures for MAPD

- *Key Takeaways*
    - The average MAPD Star Rating dropped slightly in 2018 and is now around the 3-3.5 Star threshold for the 2018 Star Ratings for all 3 adherence measures (e.g. diabetes [3.3 Stars], hypertension [3.7 Stars], and cholesterol medications [3.3 Stars])
    - Average adherence rates for all 3 adherence measures increased by 1% compared to the 2017 Star Rating CMS reported averages
    - There still is room for improvement with the average adherence percentage around 80% for all 3 measures for MAPD health plans
    - MAPD health plans will continue to focus heavily on medication adherence improvement

- *Measure Details*
    - This measures the percentage of eligible members with a proportion of days covered (PDC) rate at 80% or over for the specific drug classes (e.g. diabetes, hypertension, and cholesterol medications)
    - Patients with one or more claims for sacubitril/valsartan are excluded from the hypertension/RASA adherence measure
    - Each of the 3, 4, and 5-star thresholds for the MAPD adherence measures increased between the 2017 and 2018 Star Ratings except for the 2 Star Threshold for Cholesterol which remained at the same threshold.
    - The average PDC scores based on 2016 data were:
        - MAPD:
            - Diabetes: 80%
            - Hypertension: 82%
            - Cholesterol: 78%

Medication Adherence Measures for PDP

- *Key Takeaways*
    - No change in the 5-star threshold for the Diabetes measure as the 5 Star threshold remained the same at 86% but all other thresholds had an increase.
    - The average PDP Star Rating also decreased and is now around the 3-star threshold for the 2018 Star Ratings for all 3 adherence measures (e.g. diabetes [3.2 Stars], hypertension [3.2 Stars], and cholesterol medications [3.3 Stars])
    - The average PDC scores based on 2016 data were:
        - PDP
            - Diabetes: 82%
            - Hypertension: 84%
            - Cholesterol: 81%

Statin Use in Persons with Diabetes

- *Key Note*
    - Proposed for inclusion in Star Ratings for 2019 (2017 data year)
        - Denominator: Any person age 40-75 years with two or more prescription fills for any hypoglycemic medication
        - Numerator: One fill of any statin medication in the measurement year
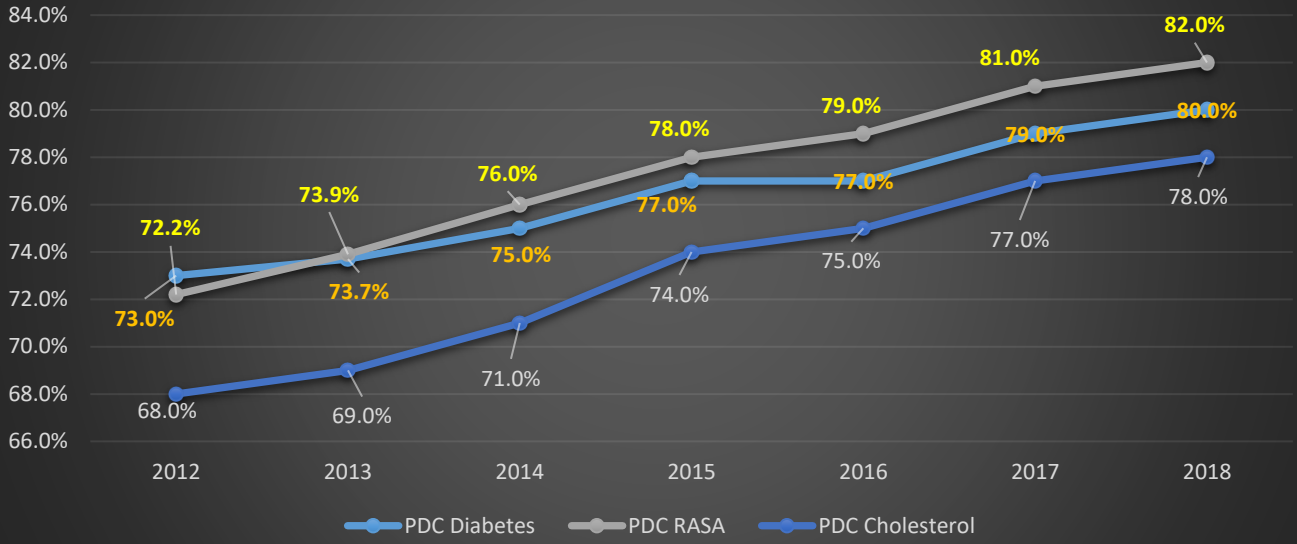
APPENDIX I: 2018 MAPD & PDP Thresholds

MAPD - 2018					
Measure Name	1 Star	2 Star	3 Star	4 Star	5 Star
PDC Diabetes	<72%	72%	78%	81%	86%
PDC Hypertension	<74%	74%	78%	82%	85%
PDC Cholesterol	<66%	66%	76%	80%	85%
CMR Completion Rate	<33%	33%	51%	59%	75%

PDP - 2018					
Measure Name	1 Star	2 Star	3 Star	4 Star	5 Star
PDC Diabetes	<76%	76%	80%	84%	86%
PDC Hypertension	<78%	78%	83%	86%	89%
PDC Cholesterol	<73%	73%	79%	82%	86%
CMR Completion Rate	<17%	17%	31%	39%	53%

APPENDIX II: MAPD & PDP Performance Trends

MAPD - Adherence Measure Averages

Year	PDC Diabetes	PDC RASA	PDC Cholesterol
2012	73.0%	72.2%	68.0%
2013	73.9%	73.7%	69.0%
2014	75.0%	76.0%	71.0%
2015	77.0%	78.0%	74.0%
2016	77.0%	79.0%	75.0%
2017	79.0%	81.0%	77.0%
2018	80.0%	82.0%	78.0%

PDP - Adherence Measure Averages

Year	PDC Diabetes	PDC RASA	PDC Cholesterol
2012	74.4%	74.3%	69.1%
2013	75.8%	76.8%	71.0%
2014	77.0%	78.0%	73.0%
2015	79.0%	81.0%	77.0%
2016	80.0%	82.0%	78.0%
2017	81.0%	83.0%	79.0%
2018	82.0%	84.0%	81.0%
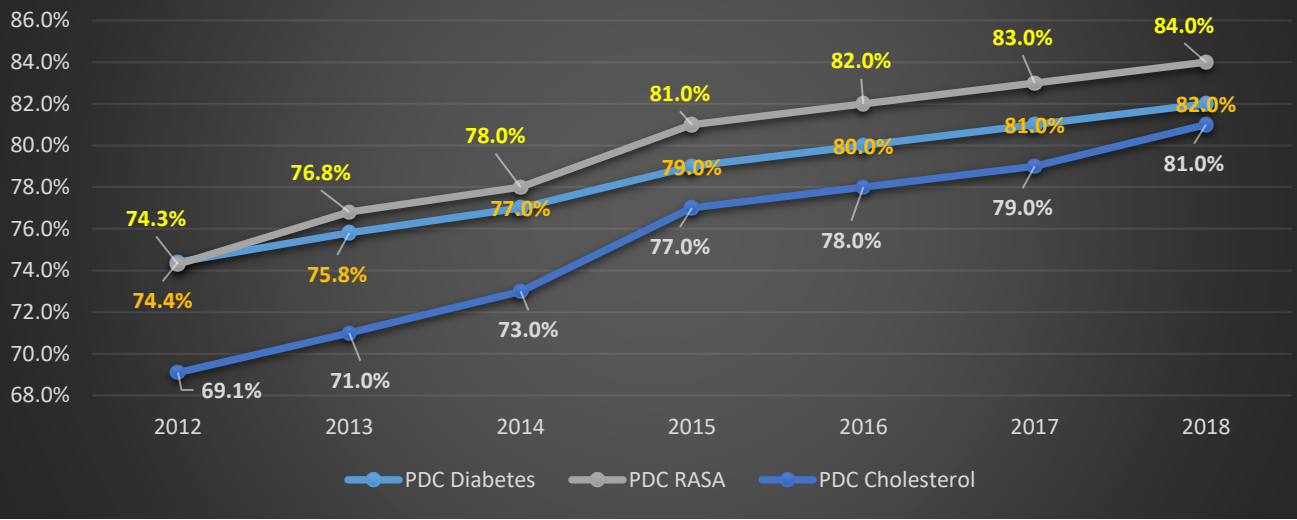
CMR Completion Rate - Measure Averages

Year	MAPD CMR Completion Rate	PDP CMR Completion Rate
2016	30.9%	15.4%
2017	45.6%	25.3%
2018	61.0%	33.0%