



## Kentucky Medical Association

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March 6, 2008

Mr. Mike Lorch  
Vice President, Health Care Management  
Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield  
13550 Triton Park Blvd.  
Louisville, KY 40223

Dear Mr. Lorch:

The Kentucky Medical Association (KMA) Quality Measurement and Improvement Committee met on February 15, 2008, to hear a presentation from Anthem Blue Cross & Blue Shield regarding an online survey tool, in association with Zagat, designed to assess patients' medical care experiences. The survey tool, planned to launch in Kentucky by April, asks Anthem enrollees to evaluate their physician based on non-medical areas such as trust, communication, availability and office environment. After 10 patients have rated a physician, the ratings are documented on the Anthem website on a "member's only" page.

Like medical associations across the country, the KMA has a number of concerns with the Anthem-Zagat program. A quote by Anthem President David R. Fusco states that, "With this tool, Anthem is helping to give consumers the ability to make informed decisions about selecting doctors based on other people's experiences, in a format that is familiar, easy to understand and meaningful." KMA Quality Committee members questioned whether the Zagat tool truly offers patients "the ability to make *informed* decisions about selecting doctors" based on the fact that the survey requests information that is directed toward customer service, not medical care.

The Anthem-Zagat survey is a marketing tool, not a quality tool. It is critical that Anthem enrollees be informed that the survey is a consumer tool, not a measure of physician quality. The committee expressed concerns that the tools were created in the interest of marketing and economics rather than what is best for the patient in terms of quality of care. Furthermore, committee members called into question the accuracy of the data, and the science and statistical significance of the opinion survey.

When the program launched in Connecticut, there was no opportunity for physicians to receive the ratings information from their patients or from Anthem, thus preventing a physician from correcting any issue a patient or patients may have with the care they receive. The KMA committee was assured that providers would have access to patient reviews, as well as receive a notice from Anthem when they receive at least 10 ratings along with their average scores.

Kentucky physicians support improving quality care and increased communication with patients, and want to work with the broader healthcare community to achieve measurable quality improvements. However, is the best format a guidebook known for helping people find such things as the best crab cakes in Baltimore? This system does not appear to provide consumers with meaningful information regarding quality healthcare.

Sincerely,

Thomas Slabaugh, MD  
President, Kentucky Medical Association

J. Gregory Cooper, MD  
Chair, Quality Measurement and Improvement  
Committee