

# ABHC

## Alliance for Better Health Care

February 12, 2008

The Honorable David Obey  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education  
and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2358 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6024

The Honorable James T. Walsh  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education  
and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2358 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6024

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Walsh:

The Alliance for Better Health Care (ABHC) Coalition thanks you for your commitment to comparative effectiveness research by providing \$30 million in FY 2008 for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to conduct this valuable work. This funding level is a notable improvement over previous years. Despite the increased level of funding for this vital research it is still lower than what Congress envisioned when it authorized comparative effectiveness research in 2003 under section 1013 of the Medicare Modernization Act.

As you consider FY 2009 appropriations legislation for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, our broad-based alliance of concerned payers, employers, unions, purchasers, health care providers, consumers and research organizations urge you to provide AHRQ \$50 million in FY 2009 to further expand the agency's capacity to conduct this work and to more closely reflect congressional intent. With so many unanswered medical questions, providing this level of funding would expand valuable research that may significantly improve health care and health outcomes and potentially reduce health care spending, as recently noted by the Congressional Budget Office.

Comparative effectiveness research — which evaluates the relative safety and effectiveness of pharmaceuticals, medical devices, medical procedures, and other interventions used to treat the same conditions — holds tremendous promise for improving the quality of health care. AHRQ has done a lot of great work so far with the relatively limited resources available, and we should continue to build on these efforts. Specifically, AHRQ has released twelve scientific reviews on the treatment options for breast cancer, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), cancer-related anemia, and

The Honorable David Obey  
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February 12, 2008  
Page 2

low-bone density, and depression, among others. The findings indicate which treatments would most benefit which patients depending on their circumstances.

We believe that these research findings released by AHRQ have just begun to show the significant value of comparative effectiveness research for patients and their providers, as well as taxpayers. But to reach its potential, comparative effectiveness research requires greater investment, allowing us to expand the evidence base and to move this information into practice. The promise of this research to improve care and patient outcomes and potentially save significant federal funds will be realized more fully if the Congress acts to increase funding to \$50 million for FY 2009. We urge you to support funding at this level.

We thank you for your interest in this issue and support for comparative clinical effectiveness research this year. We look forward to working with you in the years to come. If you should need further information, please contact Anna Schwamlein Howard of AARP at 202-434-3793.

Sincerely,

ABHC Coalition whose members include:

AARP • Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy • Aetna • AFL-CIO  
Alliance of Community Health Plans • America's Health Insurance Plans  
American Academy of Family Physicians • American Osteopathic Association  
American Pharmacists Association • American Society of Health-System Pharmacists  
Blue Cross Blue Shield Association • Blue Shield of California  
Coalition for Health Services Research • CVS Caremark • DaimlerChrysler Corporation  
Ford Motor Company • General Motors Corporation  
Group Health Cooperative • Honeywell • Kaiser Permanente • Marshfield Clinic •  
National Business Group on Health • National Partnership for Women and Families  
Service Employees International Union • The Dow Chemical Company  
The Joint Commission • UnitedHealth Group • WellPoint, Inc.

Joined by,

Consumers Union