

All-Payer Claims Databases: A Summary

What are All-Payer Claims Databases?

APCDs are data systems that collect claims data from commercial and public payers. These databases hold the potential for a much deeper understanding of patterns, quality, and cost of care across entire populations. The source of the data is transaction systems that process the payment of claims for private and public payers. In addition, some states are developing methods to capture data for uninsured individuals.

While the contents of individual states' APCDs can vary, they can include data derived from medical, eligibility, provider, pharmacy, and dental files. The medical data elements typically include diagnosis codes, the types of care received (procedure and pharmacy codes), the type of insurance product (HMO, PPO, POS), facility type (hospital, office, clinic), "cost" amounts (charge, paid, member liabilities), and provider type.

How are APCDs used?

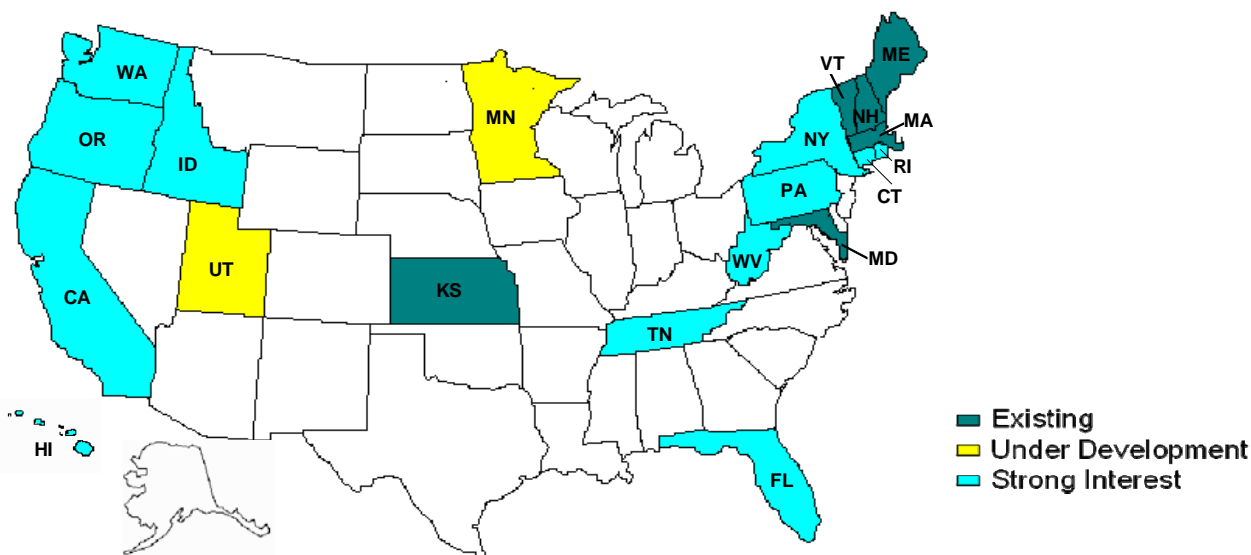
Given this breadth of APCDs, analysis of these data can answer many important health services research questions for policy makers, consumers, employers, providers, insurers, and researchers. Examples of current applications of the data include:

- Web-based consumer tools in Maine and New Hampshire that allows the user to compare the costs or total payments of procedures for different hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers (www.healthweb.maine.gov and www.nhhealthcost.org);
- The New Hampshire Medicaid program has used the data to report the cost and quality of care for several common conditions (including cardiovascular disease and mental illness) for commercially insured people compared to those covered by Medicaid (www.nhchis.org);
- In NH, the claims data have been used to demonstrate the extent to which the NH population leaves their home geography to seek care; in some parts of the state, more than 60% of the residents leave their home area to receive care (http://www.nhhealthpolicyinstitute.unh.edu/pdf/2008-12_NH-Patient-Migration-Analysis.pdf);

- An employer coalition in New Hampshire (www.nhpgh.org) is using the data to benchmark their performance against state and regional norms. A soon-to-be released study is comparing adverse drug event rates and costs between Maine and New Hampshire.
- The State of Maine’s Dirigo Health Agency’s Maine Quality Forum and the Advisory Council on Health Systems Development have used the data to produce an analysis of variation in health care in order to better define cost drivers in Maine.

The status of APCD development

APCD development is happening all over the United States. The map below shows the current development efforts for state government administered systems as of April 2009.



The issue of standardization for APCDs

While APCDs represent a robust set of data to use to advance the understanding of cost and quality of healthcare, there are concerns about the lack of standardization of the data across states. Data are being collected by different methods and with different definitions state-to-state. This non-uniform approach to develop APCDs will diminish the overall potential for these databases, and may lead to significant additional expense for the payers who are submitting the data (especially those operating in multiple states). Conversely, collecting APCDs similarly across states will enable cost-effective regional, and eventually national, databases.