Leader Letter

As a membership organization, AcademyHealth works together with individuals and organizations across the spectrum of health services research, health policy and practice. We offer a broad range of activities under one AcademyHealth umbrella that serve the many communities who constitute our members, clients, and partners. Throughout its history, AcademyHealth has been provided the knowledge, resources and expertise to help move knowledge into policy and practice. As we look toward highly-anticipated, and likely hotly-debated, reforms to our health system, AcademyHealth continues to play a vital role in bringing together the researched-based information, expertise, and resources necessary to help policymakers move forward.

In 2008, AcademyHealth undertook a strategic planning initiative that that offered an opportunity to further consider the ways we deliver on our mission, communicate about our vision and align our resources to effectively create new knowledge and help move knowledge into policy and practice. As part of that effort we reached out to a number of communities who create and use health services research about their needs and their understanding of AcademyHealth and its role in the larger landscape of health services research and health policy. This process reinforced one of AcademyHealth’s most important strengths—our ability to connect diverse communities who share an interest in and need for research and analysis to inform policy and practice.

Among last year’s priorities was continuing our commitment to ensure an adequate infrastructure exists to support the field of health services research, which will enable our members to provide reliable answers to policymakers’ most pressing policy concerns both now and into the future. We revitalized our Web site to better serve the communities who call AcademyHealth home, unveiled new training and professional development opportunities to enhance the capabilities and careers of our membership, and fostered connections between research and policy through conferences, briefings, and knowledge transfer initiatives.

This is an incredibly exciting time for our field and our organization. I invite you to spend a few minutes with this annual report and to consider joining us in our efforts to advance health services research, policy, and practice. From Interest Groups and conferences to technical assistance to policy briefs, AcademyHealth is honored to serve as the home for health services researchers, and the policymakers and professionals who depend on evidence-based information.

Sincerely,

W. David Helms, Ph.D.
AcademyHealth is a membership organization representing a broad community of individuals and organizations who conduct and use health services research to improve health and health care. Our members include health services researchers, health care providers and practitioners, and policymakers. We promote interaction across the health research and policy arenas by bringing together a broad spectrum of players to share their perspectives, learn from each other, and strengthen their working relationships. Our staff provides member services and technical assistance to:

→ Convene national scientific and health policy conferences;

→ Help public and private policymakers transform research and policy into workable programs;

→ Educate policymakers, researchers, government officials, and business leaders;

→ Disseminate vital information through research syntheses, special reports and findings, newsletters, and our Web site;

→ Manage major programs that serve the research community, health policy leaders, and business and government decision makers; and

→ Advocate for health services research through our advocacy affiliate, the Coalition for Health Services Research.

AcademyHealth also serves as a national program office, grantee or contractor for a select group of foundation and government agency programs that strengthen the field of health services research, stimulate demand for research among policymakers and practitioners, and improve the supply of research to address health policy challenges.

Together with our members, AcademyHealth is dedicated to improving the knowledge base of health care decision-making by supporting the professional development of those who conduct and use health services research, advocating for the tools and funding necessary to do this important work, and helping to translate health services research findings into policy and practice.

CASE STUDY

AH Serving the Community

Created in 2008, “AH...Serving the Community” is an initiative of AcademyHealth’s staff-led social committee tasked with organizing and promoting quarterly, organization-wide community service events. Events cover a wide range of interests and community needs, and participation is voluntary.

In 2008, the Committee and staff volunteers prepared more than 300 bagged lunches for Martha’s Table, donated used clothing for fire victims in our area, raised more than $2,500 for the March of Dimes March for Babies, donated books and school supplies to D.C. READS and the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Washington, and hosted a successful food drive and fundraising campaign for the Help the Homeless Walkathon.

Throughout the year, “AH...Serving the Community” provided an outlet for staff to build connections with one another and our local community.
Public Health Systems Research Interest Group

The Public Health Systems Research (PHSR) Interest Group, supported in part by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), provides a unique outlet for professionals, researchers and policymakers in the world of public health systems research. It serves as an excellent example of the way Interest Groups contribute to the membership experience while also helping to advance AcademyHealth’s mission. This Interest Group, led by member volunteers and with more than 1,600 participants, is a vibrant community for networking, learning about the latest research, and discussing anticipated research needs. In 2008, AcademyHealth hosted the Seventh Annual PHSR Interest Group Meeting in conjunction with the Annual Research Meeting. The event featured three Call for Papers sessions, nine presentations, and an evening reception with posters. It also featured two special panels: A Shared Vision for the Path Ahead, which proposed a direction for this emerging discipline, and Public Health Data, which exposed participants to new public health data harmonization initiatives. Ten student scholarships were awarded, to attend and present a poster at the meeting, and a PHSR Article of the Year award was presented.

In July, a PHSR Cyber Seminar, Methods Matter: Investigating Causation and Correlation, was conducted. This event supported the use of traditional HSR methods in the emerging field of PHSR, in order to strengthen PHSR research design and ultimately build a sound body of evidence. Speakers included Glen Mays, Ph.D., M.P.H. (University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences) and David Grembowski, Ph.D. (University of Washington) as well as AcademyHealth Methods Council Chair Bryan Dowd, Ph.D. (University of Minnesota). An audience of more than 200, including public health systems researchers, health services researchers, students, and policymakers, attended this first ‘Methods Matter’ offering.
Developing more and better health services research

AcademyHealth works to improve both the supply and quality of health services research by expanding and improving the scientific basis of the field, increasing the capabilities and skills of researchers, and promoting the development of the necessary financial, human, infrastructure, and data resources.

In 2008, these efforts centered upon convening meetings and networking opportunities, developing and offering training and skill building opportunities, highlighting examples of health services research that has made an impact on health policy, and saluting the leading health services research and researchers of the year via our annual awards program.

Supporting the infrastructure of the field of HSR is a core element of our work to develop more and better health services research. In 2008, AcademyHealth commissioned papers and began planning a Summit on Methods and Data to ensure the field is sufficiently positioned to respond to future challenges and opportunities. This summit will address data challenges in the field, user needs, and efforts to identify the frontiers of methods development, and will generate proposals to improve researchers’ access to quality data.

AcademyHealth also facilitates the Council of Sponsors of Health Services Research (Council of Sponsors) to provide an ongoing forum for major public and private funders of HSR to review research priorities, oversee the development of a strategic plan for the field, and to better coordinate and target the limited funds available for this field. The first Council of Sponsors meeting was held January 30, 2008. The Council discussed the major health and health care challenges facing the United States, how HSR can help our public and private sectors better understand and resolve these issues and how the Council can help maximize the contributions of HSR. In addition, the Council worked with major funders from federal agencies and foundations to produce a compendium of HSR related to health reform.

Among the highlights of 2008 was AcademyHealth’s work with the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) Committee on Health Research and the Privacy of Health Information: the HIPAA Privacy Rule, presentations, the 2008 ARM also featured many skill-training opportunities to encourage the use of new methods in health services research. These 13 methods workshops offered professional development opportunities for participants at all levels of career progression.

Finally, AcademyHealth honored the 25th anniversary of the meeting by recognizing the leaders and visionaries that contributed to the ARM over the years. By acknowledging their contributions to the field of health services research, AcademyHealth seeks to increase awareness of the value of the field, as well as encourage and inspire innovative work from the next generation of health services researchers.

Related Projects
- AcademyHealth Awards
- AcademyHealth Council of Sponsors
- AcademyHealth Methods Council
- Annual Research Meeting
- Health Care Financing and Organization (HCFO)
- The HSR Summit Series

Annual Research Meeting

The Annual Research Meeting (ARM) is the premier forum for health services research and is a key component to AcademyHealth’s efforts to promote and expand the scientific basis of the health services research field. In 2008, the ARM celebrated its 25th anniversary with record attendance of more than 2,300 participants, and used this opportunity to focus on the past, present, and future of health services research.

Each year, the ARM agenda features superior research content that is presented to a wide audience, including health services researchers, providers, and key decision makers. In an effort to support the development of health services research and encourage participation in the field, the ARM Call for Abstracts is designed to give both new and experienced researchers the opportunity to present their work. More than half of the program content in 2008 was chosen by peer-review through the abstract submission process, and nearly 600 speakers presented on a panel.

The sessions were organized around 22 themes to ensure that the agenda addressed the “hot topics” in health services research, such as quality, disparities, coverage, and access. To encourage discussion and the exchange of new ideas, each presentation was followed by a question-and-answer period, where the presenters’ peers offered insights on the findings and methods used. In addition to cutting-edge research

CASE STUDY

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which was charged with assessing the efficacy and impact of the HIPAA rule. To support this work, AcademyHealth developed and fielded a survey of its members regarding the impact of the rule on their ability to conduct their research. In February, AcademyHealth presented its members’ experiences with HIPAA to the committee. Based on this and other research from stakeholders across the spectrum of health research, the Committee drafted a set of recommendations to “facilitate the efficient and effective conduct of important health research while also maintaining or strengthening the privacy protections of identifiable health information.” A report of their recommendations was released on February 4, 2009.

In March 2008, AcademyHealth began a project to examine whether and to what degree universities have recognized and rewarded applied research and knowledge transfer as part of their faculty promotion processes. The project included two parts: the first examines perceptions among junior and senior HSR faculty of the promotion system and identifies innovative ways that universities have tried to establish criteria that goes beyond the number of peer review journals. The second examines the same set of questions as they relate to schools of business administration, engineering and social work. The final report will be available in 2009.

**AcademyHealth Methods Council**

The Methods Council was established in 2006. Chaired by Bryan Dowd, the Council currently includes 27 members representing the range of disciplines and methods in HSR. The Council contributes to AcademyHealth’s efforts to support more and better research by providing insight into new methods and research trends, recommending training and professional development topics, and providing direction for AcademyHealth’s methods Web site, www.hsrmethods.org. The Council oversees these and other methods offerings, through a series of committees.

AcademyHealth’s methods website, www.HSRMethods.org was released to the general public in January 2008. It includes an extensive glossary of more than 700 methodological terms; suggested readings and presentations; links to methodological resources, such as online tutorials and textbooks; and a discussion board focused on methodological issues. In addition, two previously completed components: guidelines and teaching materials on ethics in research and guidelines on HIPAA privacy regulations are included. Since January, HSRMethods.org has received approximately 1,000 visits a month, of which one-third are from international users. The website is constantly maintained to ensure that all links and content are available for users and the glossary and links to methods resources continue to grow under the guidance of the AcademyHealth Methods Council. To help disseminate useful methodological presentations from recent meetings, material from the 2007 and 2008 Annual Research Meetings is also included.
We support the use of the best available research and information

AcademyHealth disseminates research findings, assists with the translation of findings and experience into useful information for decision makers, and works to improve communication between health services researchers and policymakers. These activities include bringing policymakers and researchers together to discuss and debate policy priorities and research needs; convening learning networks that share new research, applications and the insights of experience among policy professionals facing similar challenges, and creating opportunities for small group learning among researchers and policymakers.

In 2008, a new initiative, “Learning from Other Industrialized Health Systems,” was launched to expand senior health policy leaders’ knowledge of health systems’ experience with reform and innovations in other countries, and to promote the use of this knowledge in U.S. health reform efforts. The program is sponsored by Kaiser Permanente and the National Institute for Health Care Management Research and Educational (NIHCM) Foundation. Each year of this three-year project focuses on a different topic: the 2008 focus was on comparative effectiveness research (CER). As part of this effort, AcademyHealth commissioned a comparative analysis of other nations’ experiences in comparative effectiveness research by Gerard (Jerry) Anderson from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Kalipso Chalkidou from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) in the UK. The authors presented their findings to a select group of CER policy/research and industry thought leaders on December 8.

With the support of The Commonwealth Fund, AcademyHealth continues its efforts to build the field of Long Term Care research through the Building Bridges: Making a Difference in Long Term Care program. This series of annual colloquia, policy seminars, and ongoing workgroups, provides a venue for LTC stakeholders to address high priority problems that affect access, quality of care, and quality of life for individuals with LTC needs. The initiative provides a unique opportunity for diverse stakeholders and opinion leaders to exchange information, debate the issues, examine proposed solutions, review available evidence, and identify additional research needs. This year, AcademyHealth conducted its third half-day policy seminar in conjunction with AcademyHealth’s National Health Policy Conference (NHPC) as well as the fifth annual colloquium, held in conjunction with AcademyHealth’s Annual Research Meeting (ARM).

The NHPC allows for researchers to hear first-hand from policymakers about what challenges they face with health policy issues, and also allows for policymakers to gain facts and insight from health services researchers and their experiences. Through this dialogue, AcademyHealth seeks to facilitate the translation of current and innovative health services research into health policy and practice.

In 2008, AcademyHealth encouraged participants to “join the debate” at the NHPC, with a goal of increasing discussions among participants and panelists. More than 650 attendees participated, including nearly 65 speakers. The NHPC agenda was designed to create dialogue pertaining to three topic tracks: ensuring equitable access, fostering better care with better value, and managing system stressors.

In the middle of the primaries, the NHPC provided a first look at potential health care reform proposals from the advisors for presidential candidates Clinton, McCain, and Obama. The health policy advisors highlighted the candidates’ plans and welcomed input from the audience. This opportunity allowed researchers to understand the potential challenges and changes to come, which could help guide their own research priorities for the future.
Health Care Financing and Organization (HCFO)

HCFO, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation administered by Academy Health, is a mechanism for both supporting investigator initiated research and encouraging the use of that research in the policymaking process. HCFO’s focus is timely research that explores issues of financing and organization.

The program provides funding and dissemination support to researchers, hosts briefings to encourage the use of the data, and distributes findings and policy briefs to educate policymakers about research that is at the forefront of the policy debate. HCFO awarded more 25 new grants in 2008 on topics ranging from the characteristics of best medical practices and resource use to efficiency in episodes of care, and from variations in health care cost and quality to the impact of immigrants on the U.S. health system. The program also published 12 different policy and findings briefs focusing on issues from administrative simplification to improving access to improve quality.

In September, HCFO hosted a small meeting with RWJF staff, funders (e.g. AHRQ, Commonwealth Fund), and government agencies to discuss the upcoming release of Medicare Part D data. The group discussed relevant research questions and the feasibility of answering such questions given data set restrictions.

In October, RWJF and HCFO hosted a small meeting, Insurance Choices: Behaviors of Firms and Their Workforces. Invited participants identified key questions that policymakers need to answer about the impact of reform on employer and employee behavior, discussed the data necessary to understand the potential employer and employee response, and discussed a strategy for linking and collecting new data to inform these questions.
We assist health policy and practice leaders in addressing major health and health policy challenges.

AcademyHealth provides high quality policy and technical assistance to policymakers at all levels. We offer educational programs to advance the use of policy analysis and research, and work to identify areas where additional research and information are needed. These activities range from facilitating educational and technical assistance for states working toward health reforms as the national program office of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s State Coverage Initiatives (SCI) program to offering the Health Policy Orientation, a unique, three-day course that provides an in-depth look at the policymaking process in Washington.

The SCI program provides timely, experience-based information and assistance to state leaders in order to help them move health care reform forward at the state level. SCI offers an annual slate of technical assistance and knowledge sharing meetings as well as regular dissemination of news and information about research and experience-based lessons from the field. In 2008, SCI held focused meetings to assist states in understanding issues related to Section 125 plan requirements, discussed the lessons of health reform efforts in California, New Jersey, Minnesota, and Kansas, and explored issues related to the politics of health reform, health information technology, and chronic disease management.

We assist health policy and practice leaders in addressing major health and health policy challenges.

The Quality Institute was designed to assist health policy leaders by:

- Providing customized support to states that are seriously considering substantial quality improvement efforts;
- Assessing current challenges facing individual states;
- Using current research and best practices to identify high-performing quality improvement programs and policies;
- Identifying appropriate diagnostic and implementation tools, analyzing possible approaches and considering policy tradeoffs, and revising or refining current state-specific plans; and
- Allowing state participants the opportunity to network and discuss their own experiences and best practices.

A kick-off meeting for the project brought state teams together to discuss major issues of health care reform and quality improvement. During the meeting, 12 expert faculty members from think tanks, academia, consulting firms, and state and federal agencies provided in-depth technical assistance to the state teams. These health services and policy researchers encouraged state teams to think creatively about how to design their quality improvement efforts, and offered their extensive experiences and knowledge throughout the meeting. State teams met independently with faculty, then met in large group sessions where they were able to discuss new ideas and apply the experiences of others to the challenges in their own states.

In the months since the initial meeting, the State Quality Improvement Institute has sponsored two cyber seminars for state participants, as well as facilitated additional in-person interaction between faculty and state policymakers. State participants recognize the value of the knowledge the health services and policy researchers and are eager to work with them over the course of the year-long Quality Institute to advance their quality improvement goals. As one state participant noted, “The outside observations and technical expertise offered by the experts sponsored by this program have provided valuable feedback to our efforts and have also been a great educational resource for our stakeholders.”
AcademyHealth’s third international health study tour to the Netherlands, offered in collaboration with the Netherlands Embassy and the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport, was held in September. The tours 18 participants gained first-hand understanding of the Netherlands’ design of an insurance connector with national-level risk-adjustment and an individual mandate and their use of quasi-governmental entities in monitoring and regulating the insurance market. A “bounce-back” sessions, held a few months following the tour, helps ensure the knowledge gained through these tours is disseminated widely.

AcademyHealth’s seventh annual Health Policy Orientation, Behind the Scenes of Decision Making in Washington, was held October 20–23 in Washington, D.C. This meeting offers an in-depth introduction to the key players, formal and informal policymaking processes, and critical health policy issues. The Orientation provides a foundation for researchers, practitioners and others who seek to understand how their work can influence the policymaking process. The program includes presentations by well-known experts, interactive panels and group discussions, tutorials, and a congressional site visit.

**CASE STUDY**

**Ethical Recruitment of Foreign Educated Nurses**

In 2008 our work to assist leaders in addressing major health and health policy challenges included an innovative project to create a code of conduct for the ethical recruitment of foreign educated nurses to the United States. Foreign-educated nurses are eager to work in the United States and many employers are eager to have them. However, AcademyHealth research revealed instances of abuse on both sides and concerns exist about the quality of care issues and the provision of adequate orientation to these nurses. In response, this project brought together a wide spectrum of stakeholders to address the public policy, health care quality and workforce issues around international recruitment and convened a task force to build consensus about best practices.

AcademyHealth undertook this effort along with the O’Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at Georgetown University, with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

The “Voluntary Code of Ethical Conduct for the Recruitment of Foreign-Educated Nurses to the United States” (the code) was issued at a press conference in August 2008. It sets out standards for fair and transparent recruitment, the provision of cultural and clinical orientation, and best practices to ensure that recruitment is not harmful to nurses’ home countries. Though The Code is wholly voluntary, health care organizations and recruiters that subscribe are committing to adhere to a series of practical standards and to emulate best practices.

The Code has been endorsed by these and a number of other groups, including the American Organization of Nurse Executives, AFT Healthcare, the Service Employees International Union, the American Hospital Association, the American Association of International Healthcare Recruitment, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, the American Health Care Association, and the National Association for Home Care and Hospice.
As AcademyHealth’s advocacy arm, the Coalition for Health Services Research advocates for greater federal investment in the infrastructure that supports the field of health services research. In doing so, the Coalition also seeks to increase the use of health services research in policymaking and advocate for greater investment in investigator-initiated research.

In 2008, the Coalition was active throughout the appropriations process, working in cooperation with organizational affiliates and other partners in the health advocacy community to encourage policymakers to approve budget increases for agencies that support health services research and health data. With increased funding, the organizations would be able to continue career development for researchers, maintain accurate data collection, and issue awards and grants for health services researchers. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) received budget increases for fiscal year 2008 and substantial increases were slated for the 2009 fiscal year.

To help educate policymakers on the importance of using health services research to inform decision making, the Coalition offered testimony at a public witness hearing of the House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations. Coalition Board member Ken Thorpe, Ph.D., of Emory University, testified before subcommittee members on the need to invest in health services research and health data. He stressed the importance of funding to ensure the development of more and better health services research.

“AHRQ needs funding for new and competing grants to rejuvenate the free market place of ideas, and to support the next generation of researchers to ensure the field’s capacity to respond to the growing public- and private-sector demand for research,” said Dr. Thorpe.

Also in 2008, the Coalition actively sought policy changes to increase funding for investigator-initiated research and comparative effectiveness research, submitting official comments and congressional testimony for the record; to expand needed investments in the research infrastructure; and to improve the coordination of federal funding for this field. The Coalition also advocated for access to data, submitting comments on the release of Medicare Part D data, the creation of a National Data Stewardship Entity, and the availability of vital statistics.

The Coalition’s advocacy activities in 2008 laid the groundwork for future investment in and recognition of health services research and health data.
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Child Policy Research Center
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center

Joseph Thompson, M.D.
Surgeon General, State of Arkansas
Director, Arkansas Center for Health Improvement
Associate Professor, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
AcademyHealth Financial Information

Sources of Revenue for 2008

- Foundation Grants: 48%
- Federal Grants and Contracts: 24%
- Meeting Registration and Exhibit Fees: 18%
- Contributions to CHSR: 2%
- Investment and Other Income: 2%
- Contributions: 2%
- Membership Dues: 4%

Use of Funds by Mission Category 2008

- Assist Health Policy and Practice Leaders in Addressing Major Health Changes: 27%
- Support the Development of Health Services Research: 26%
- Facilitate the Use of the Best Available Research and Information: 34%
- Other Programs not Allocated to Mission Elements: 13%
AcademyHealth Funders and Supporters for 2008

**Federal Government**
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
National Center for Health Statistics
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Health Resources and Services Administration
Maternal and Child Health Bureau
National Library of Medicine
Department of Veterans Affairs
Health Services Research & Development Service

**Foundations**
California HealthCare Foundation
The Commonwealth Fund
The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation
Kansas Health Foundation
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Nemours
The Packard Foundation
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Wellpoint

**Health Care Payers & Providers**
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
Gesinger Health System
Kaiser Permanente Institute for Health Policy
Thomson Healthcare

**Pharmaceutical Industry**
Johnson & Johnson
Merck and Company
National Pharmaceutical Council
Pfizer

**Associations**
American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
American Nurses Association
American Osteopathic Association
Association of American Medical Colleges
National Association of Children's Hospitals & Related Institutions
National Health Council

**Universities**
University of Buffalo, School of Nursing
University of California, San Francisco Institute for Health Policy Studies, School of Medicine
Columbia University School of Nursing
University of Kansas, School of Nursing
University of Kansas, Medical Research Center
University of Maryland, School of Nursing
University of Wisconsin, Madison, School of Nursing

**Other**
Doc Site
Elsevier
General Electric
Georgia Health Policy Center
Health Management Associates
The Lewin Group
RAND Health

**Individual and Organizational Members**
Individual members – 3,300
Organizational affiliates - 145