



February 9, 2015

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman, Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Diana DeGette
Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Response to 21st Century Cures Initiative Discussion Draft

AcademyHealth welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Committee on Energy & Commerce on its 21st Century Cures Initiative Discussion Document. We are the professional home of more than 5,000 health services researchers, policy analysts, and practitioners, whose work helps us understand and improve our complex health system, and thus enable better health outcomes for more people at greater value.

The 21st Century Cures Initiative is in and of itself a positive indicator that Congress is making a true effort to build science and evidence and drive innovative ideas that will benefit patients and society at large. AcademyHealth strongly believes in the bill's foundational mission "to accelerate the discovery, development, and delivery of 21st century cures," but would encourage lawmakers to place equal emphasis on each phase—discovery, development, *and* delivery. It isn't enough to develop cures; for patients to actually benefit from these cures, we must also understand how to most effectively and efficiently deliver them to patients, which has implications for health care quality, costs, access, and ultimately patient outcomes.

As the Committee continues to revise its 21st Century Cures Initiative, we urge members to ensure the legislation is reflective of the whole research continuum, considering the role of health services research in addition to basic and clinical research. While medical research discovers cures for diseases, health services research discovers innovative cures for the health system. Health services research diagnoses problems in health care and public health delivery and identifies solutions. Innovations from this field of research can be used right now by patients, health care providers, public health professionals, hospitals, employers, and public and private payers to improve care today.

AcademyHealth was encouraged by several provisions in this discussion document, and among those, would place emphasis on the following areas:

- **Patients should be at the center of care, with their perspectives incorporated from the outset.**

AcademyHealth greatly appreciated the Committee's inclusion of incorporating patient perspectives into the regulatory process. We feel strongly that patients should be empowered to make informed choices about what treatments work best for them, and a core component of this is dependent upon the evaluation and proper communication of interventions and their relative safety, effectiveness, and cost.

Advancing Research, Policy and Practice

- **Responsible communication of scientific developments is critical for the advancement of research.**

AcademyHealth supports the flow of information for research and the infrastructure and environment needed for its dissemination. To that end, we encourage Congress to consider policies that enhance—and do not unnecessarily restrict—the production of research and policies that enhance the quality, availability, timeliness, and affordability of data and tools used to produce research.

- **Lawmakers should make their best effort to reduce administrative burdens that unnecessarily hinder scientific innovation and progress.**

Streamlining the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process will help ensure that individuals who participate in research are protected and that the data with which we work are collected, used, and stored ethically and appropriately. The reform of this policy will relieve administrative burden while assuring the rigorous and potentially enhanced protection of human subjects.

- **AcademyHealth supports enhancing the evidence base, and moving knowledge into action.**

We value the Committee's inclusion of provisions that provide for the use of evidence within policymaking and practice, recognizing the importance of research to improve health care and care delivery.

In sum, even with more, better, and faster drug discoveries, innovations will fall short of their potential if we don't determine how best to deploy them to physicians and patients and determine what works, for whom, under what circumstances, and at what cost. Health services research helps maximize the return on investment in basic and clinical research, ensuring that patients have access to and truly benefit from drug discoveries and medical advances.

We look forward to working with the Committee to determine how to best integrate health services research into the 21st Century Cures Initiative, and how we can ensure these discoveries reach their full potential.

If you have any questions about these comments, please contact me directly at 202.292.6747 or lisa.simpson@academyhealth.org.

Sincerely,



Lisa Simpson, M.B., B.Ch., M.P.H., F.A.A.P.

President and CEO
AcademyHealth