



Introducing the AcademyHealth and Healthcare: Journal of delivery science and innovation partnership



1. Introduction

As the Affordable Care Act marches towards its tenth anniversary, US health care delivery and finance continue to undergo massive fundamental changes.

Health care delivery organizations are increasingly called upon to extend their reach into new domains: accountability for costs and financial risk; modifying the lifestyle choices of patients; customizing ‘precision’ therapies and care programs; and patient management across the continuum of care are just a few examples.

Yet, our collective understanding of how best to drive this change and, more fundamentally, in what directions remains an emerging field we called “the science of delivery” or “delivery science” when we (ASN and SHJ) first launched this journal. Relative to other areas of medical and social science—the field is young.

At *Healthcare*, we recognized the need to develop a field of health care delivery science – to not only advance research with pragmatic methods and real-world applications that inform policy and management, but also to build a forum for a vibrant professional community committed to understanding how to make health care better. As the leading professional association for health services and policy researchers, AcademyHealth couldn't agree more –working together with its members to ensure the methods, data, and workforce exist to make research more reliable and relevant.

To propel this mission and bring together two entities dedicated to its success, we are announcing a partnership between AcademyHealth and *Healthcare: The Journal of Delivery Science of Innovation*.

Under this partnership, *Healthcare* will become an Official Journal of AcademyHealth and also debut a new section focused on a key aspect of delivery science: health data methods. The new section, entitled *Insights in Analyzing Health Data*, will feature articles focused on innovative methods for analyzing various types of health data and for demonstrating how delivery systems are learning from that data. As part of this transition, AcademyHealth will sunset its eGEMs journal and transition papers from that pipeline to *Healthcare*.

2. AcademyHealth's history of supporting the learning health system

AcademyHealth's work to support the advancement of the learning health system began in 2010 with the Electronic Data Methods (EDM) Forum, a learning community connecting 11 Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) grantees working to improve the use of electronic health data, the lifeblood of the learning health system. The grantees came together at a time of great change in health information

Technology and were funded under the landmark American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

By 2016 when its funding for the grantees ended, the EDM Forum had organically become a community 4000 strong, built on mutual respect for diverse expertise and committed to working together to solve some of the most pervasive issues in healthcare. This community ultimately jump-started a national dialogue on critical learning health system data issues such as standardized data collection, data sharing across systems, addressing data quality issues, the use of patient-reported outcomes data, and data governance.¹

Launched in 2013, the open access, peer-reviewed journal *eGEMs* (Generating Evidence & Methods to improve patient outcomes) emerged as a key platform for the community's findings on these issues. Given the rapidly changing field, *eGEMs* papers were soon reaching beyond the EDM Forum network, building a broader knowledge base around the use electronic health data to realize the full potential of the learning health system. Papers have been cited more than 1000 times in journals across disciplines from *Health Affairs* and *JAMA* to the *American Journal of Cardiology* and the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*.

Similar to the ethos of *Healthcare*, papers in *eGEMs* provided details around lessons learned by those working on the cutting-edge of data methods and data-driven health system transformation. For example, the most cited paper in *eGEMs* outlines the data model of a virtual data warehouse created by the HMO Research Network.² The paper goes into enough detail to allow readers to emulate the data model in their own systems in order to achieve a multi-site interoperable health care data system. *eGEMs* papers continued to increasingly reflect issues specific to delivery systems, with funded special collections from groups such as RTI, the High Value Healthcare Collaborative, and the Health Care Systems Research Network. Most recently, *eGEMs* partnered with ARHQ for a special issue on data-driven health care innovation across a variety of delivery settings. That special issue is slated for publication in *eGEMs* in June and will feature examples of the kind of important submissions we hope to receive for the new section of *Healthcare: the Journal of Delivery Science and Innovation* called *Insights in Analyzing Health Data*.

3. Building and supporting a new field

Meanwhile, in an almost parallel track to AcademyHealth's EDM Forum, *Healthcare* was launched in response to similar gaps in the field. Created in the wake of ACA health reform and increased investments in data infrastructure and real-world evidence development and application, the journal sought to provide a scholarly home for work that was dedicated to the “how” of health care. Randomized controlled trial

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methods, commonly held as the gold standard in clinical communities but also in federal agencies like AHRQ, are frequently not well suited to health care delivery research. While randomization is still a core to health care delivery evaluations, the health sector needs a broader suite of methods from which to draw upon. *Healthcare* was launched in 2012 to support the development of the scientific basis and application of these methods to healthcare transformation.

From its inception, one of *Healthcare's* core goals has been to provide a scholarly “professional” home for health care delivery science researchers and practitioners in the US and beyond. This reflected a surge of interest in clinician innovator roles in academic medical centers as well as population managers and innovative program leads within health care delivery organizations more broadly. However, because health care delivery research and innovation did not fit perfectly with any other community, developing a career around professional contributions and academic promotion has been challenging. *Healthcare* has been dedicated to addressing this dynamic professional environment. Beyond providing a scholarly home, *Healthcare* launched a new section for case studies meant for health care innovators to share best practices and lessons learned in easily translatable format. This accomplished two goals – providing an outlet to disseminate this work and providing a resource for practitioners to learn about such applications.

These evolutions in *Healthcare's* offerings have made it an even more suitable home for the type of work published in *eGEMs*. While the final *eGEMs* papers will publish in June, the more than 200 *eGEMs* papers will maintain their original DOIs and continue to be freely available via PubMed Central. Through the new *Healthcare* section, we are pleased to have found an opportunity for this critical work to reach an even broader audience. It's a testament to the dedication and sustained passion of the many members of the EDM Forum and the expanded *eGEMs* community that the work they produced now has a place among mainstream publishers such as Elsevier.

AcademyHealth has built upon the work of the EDM Forum by continuing to support and connect data and method experts through its expert councils, fellowship opportunities, professional development orientations and large scale convenings. For example, AcademyHealth hosts the annual Health Datapalooza, a gathering focused on facilitating data access for evidence building, a key component to enable new, creative solutions in health care.

AcademyHealth's newest effort to serve this growing community, and complement the partnership with *Healthcare* as an official journal, is through the creation of a new Learning Health System Interest Group (IG). AcademyHealth's IGs facilitate interaction of individuals around specific topic areas relating to health services research and health policy. This new IG is launching at this year's AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, June 1–4, in Washington, D.C. and will include

leaders in health system research centers, academic institutions and private research firms who are all working to advance innovation and delivery science. Throughout the year, the group is also planning to host a journal club with regular webinars to discuss relevant journal articles, an active listserv for exchanging the latest delivery system news and research, and regular calls to engage members on topics of interest.

4. Converging paths

The converging paths of AcademyHealth and *Healthcare* have led us to this partnership that offers a unique opportunity to now go farther, together. As an important milestone for the field of health care delivery science, this partnership brings together the premier professional organization focused on how the health system works and how to improve it with the journal dedicated to the same. The goal is to improve health care delivery and inform policy and practice to enable health systems – be they local, regional, national, or global – to achieve their promises of health to patients and citizens. The new *Insights in Analyzing Health Data* section will be dedicated to the methodological aspects unique to delivery science, but the partnership will also catalyze advancement of the community through other activities such as publishing workshops, special sessions at AcademyHealth meetings and co-developed calls for papers. We look forward to seeing how bringing our two efforts together will make a lasting impact on our collective efforts to improve health and health care through the use of evidence.

References

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