Preface

Quality in Thoracic Surgery

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Editor

The field of quality measurement and quality improvement in health care continues to evolve. Multiple stakeholders, including patients, physicians, and payers, bring different perspectives as to what constitutes high-quality care. Assessments of quality are used to improve processes of care, rank providers, guide patient choice, and guide reimbursement. Historically, quality in surgical care has been measured with the hard clinical endpoints of morbidity and mortality. While such outcome measures are still valid, other measures, such as patient quality of life, cost, and resource utilization, are critical and must be measured. At present, our ability to collect, analyze, and use these data is a matter that is meaningful to our patients, and health systems remain limited. In this issue of *Thoracic Surgery Clinics*, an expert group of thoracic surgeons with a specific interest in quality measurement and improvement provides a detailed review of the current state and future directions of quality measurement in thoracic surgery.

Articles in this issue by Dr Raymond and Dr Chang and colleague, respectively, give an overview on current methodologies for risk assessment and performance measurement in lung and esophageal cancer surgery. Both of these experts have extensive experience in the development of such methodologies through the Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) General Thoracic Surgery Database (GTSD). Next, Dr Puri and colleagues explore the relevance of oncologic quality indicators in thoracic surgery, such as completeness of resection and lymph node staging. Such critical process measures are currently not included in many measures of performance

for lung and esophageal cancer surgery. National Quality Forum (NQF) –endorsed quality metrics in thoracic surgery are then reviewed in the article by Dr Burfeind, who has helped lead STS in the development of NQF quality metrics, and colleague.

The next four articles in this issue provide an overview of other surrogates or alternate measures of quality in surgery. Volume of surgical procedures performed has long been postulated as a marker of higher-quality care. Dr Kozower, who has significant experience investigating this topic, provides an in-depth analysis of the relevance of volume outcome relationships in thoracic surgery. Dr Farjah explores the “failure to rescue” outcome metric to distinguish high- and low-quality thoracic surgery programs. Value in health care is often defined as quality divided by cost. Providers and health care entities seek to provide high quality while containing costs. In the article by Dr Force and colleague, the association with high-quality care in thoracic surgery and associated health care costs is described. Importantly, missing from our assessments of quality in surgery is the patient perspective. Dr Khullar and I provide an introduction to patient-reported outcomes and their relevance to quality measurement in thoracic surgery in our article.

The final articles of this issue cover several important topics. The veracity of our databases, in particular the STS GTSD, allows us to develop accurate risk models and performance measures. Dr Magee, who has led the audit of the GTSD for the STS, reports on the importance and results of the database audit process. Dr Brunelli next introduces the European Society of

Thoracic Surgeons (ESTS) database and risk models for thoracic surgery. In order to facilitate exchange of data and learning across societies, the STS and ESTS have engaged in a database collaboration. Drs Seder and Salati describe the impetus and nature of this collaboration as well as the opportunities this will provide for advancement of the field of thoracic surgery. Finally, Dr Freeman discusses the often scrutinized metric of hospital readmissions following thoracic surgery.

Quality in thoracic surgery consists of many components: the safety of the surgery, long-term survival and quality of life, and containment of

costs and resource utilization. An expert group of thoracic surgeons has contributed thoughtful scholarly reviews on various topics related to the field of quality measurement. I hope that you enjoy their contributions and enhance your understanding of quality measurement.

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