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October is Talk About Prescriptions Month

*Illinois Foundation for Quality Health Care: Working to Improve the Safe Use
of Prescription Medication*

OAK BROOK, Ill., September 24, 2007 – The Illinois Foundation for Quality Health Care (IFQHC), the Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) for Illinois is working to improve awareness among consumers, especially seniors, about the importance of becoming better educated about their prescription drugs during the National Council on Patient Information and Education’s *Talk About Prescriptions Month* in October. This year’s theme “Talk About Prescriptions – It’s a Must!” focuses on safe and appropriate medication use and suggests ways older adults, their caregivers, their health care providers and public, private and voluntary organizations can become more involved in improving medication use.

Since August 2005, IFQHC’s pharmacy team has focused its efforts on increasing the awareness of Medication Therapy Management (MTM) programs, a quality improvement component of the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit. MTM is designed to optimize health outcomes for select Medicare beneficiaries through improved medication use. IFQHC has developed several informational handouts and written articles to educate providers and beneficiaries on the potential benefits of participating in these programs.

Senior citizens may be more susceptible to potential harm from medications and are also more likely to take more medications than younger individuals. Proper use of these medications is particularly important in order to reduce the risks of an adverse drug event that, at times may result in injury, hospitalization or even death. Encouraging patients and their caregivers to ask questions and better understand the medications they are taking is an important step in limiting adverse drug events.

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In another effort to improve medication use, IFQHC's home health team has been working with home health agencies throughout the state to improve patients' self management of oral medication. Improvement in the management of oral medications is an important part of reducing avoidable acute care hospitalizations because incorrect use of medications is the cause of many unplanned hospital visits. Of the 276 home health agencies statewide receiving training materials from IFQHC, approximately 60 percent have shown improvement in helping their patients become more independent at administering their medications. This translates to 44,000 patient episodes impacted.

According to IFQHC's Director of Nursing Home and Home Health, Leslie Kolb, RN, BSN, "Education and training are the key components to improving the management of oral medications. We congratulate the agencies' efforts and look forward to continued collaborations with them."

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Located in Oak Brook, Ill., IFQHC is the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) for the state of Illinois. QIOs work with physicians and health care professionals to promote high quality medical care for Medicare beneficiaries. IFQHC is contracted by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to perform designated quality improvement activities with healthcare providers across Illinois. For more information on IFQHC, visit our Web site at www.ifqhc.org.