



Robin Osborn
Vice President

2004 Annual Report

International Program in Health Policy and Practice



The Fund's annual international symposium provides an important forum for exploring health system issues of common concern to the world's industrialized nations. At the 2004 symposium, John Hutton MP, England's Minister of State for Health (flanked by Ian Shugart, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Canada, and John Iglehart, founding editor of *Health Affairs*) commented on findings of the Fund's international survey of public views on primary care and discussed reforms under way in his country.

The Fund's International Program in Health Policy and Practice is dedicated to building an international network of policy-oriented health care researchers and encouraging cross-national comparisons of health care systems' performance and policy approaches. As part of that work, the program conducts high-level policy forums for international exchange, which foster creative thinking about health care problems common to the U.S. and other industrialized countries and highlight innovative policy solutions.

Six-Year Board Review

The International Program in Health Policy and Practice (IHP), directed since 1997 by Fund vice president Robin Osborn, had its six-year review by the Commonwealth Fund Board of Directors in April 2004. As part of the review, Harvard University's David Blumenthal, M.D., conducted an independent evaluation, for which he surveyed 128 key informants, Harkness Fellows, and mentors.

The survey respondents were nearly unanimous in their endorsement of IHP and their agreement that the Fund should

continue sponsoring an international program. Ninety-three percent of respondents agreed that IHP is making progress in developing a network of health policy and health services researchers. Nearly all respondents rated IHP as very or moderately effective in promoting high-level exchanges between industrialized countries, and nine of 10 respondents felt that the program was enhancing the Fund's ability to inform the U.S. policy debate and expanding the audience for all of the Fund's work. In addition, more than four of five found the products produced by IHP to be useful in their work and agreed that the program enabled the Fund to draw on other countries' innovations in developing its U.S. programs. Key program components of IHP were all rated very highly, with the Harkness Fellowships receiving the strongest endorsement of all program activities. While the policy issues addressed by the program over the first six years received broad support, there were suggestions for further emphasis, including quality improvement initiatives, information technology, and innovative health care delivery models.

In their discussions regarding the review, Board members expressed support for expansion of the group of five countries on which IHP activities are focused, citing Germany and other European countries as the priority. The review also called for efforts to increase IHP's impact on U.S. policy thinking, as well as the program's profile in Washington, D.C.

2004 International Symposium

For the past seven years, the Fund has hosted an annual international symposium in health care policy on a topic of common concern to the U.S. and other industrialized nations. This year's symposium, held in Washington, D.C., in October 2004, brought together leading policy thinkers around the theme of primary health care innovation and reform. Participants included health ministers, or their designates,

from Australia, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the U.S., as well as senior government officials and leading researchers from each country. In addition, experts from Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden shared experiences on innovations in their countries.

U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G. Thompson co-hosted the opening dinner and emphasized the value of forums, such as the international symposium, for cross-national learning. In sharing his vision for transforming the U.S. health care system, the Secretary talked about the need to harness the potential of information technology, shift the focus from curative medicine to prevention, and give consumers more choice as a key to better quality and lower costs. Looking beyond America's borders, he was passionate in his call for using health care as a bridge to peace between countries.

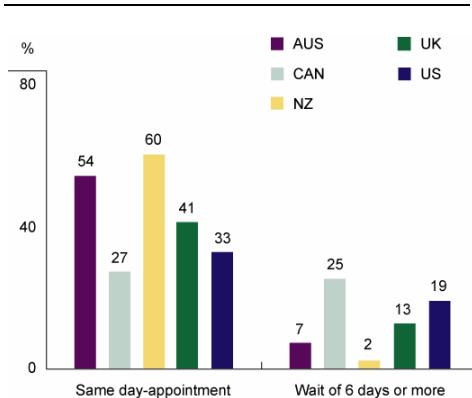
Drawing on many of the themes introduced by Secretary Thompson, Franz Knieps, director-general for health care provision and long-term care insurance for the German Ministry of Health and Social Security, presented an ambitious agenda for reforming his nation's health care system to improve quality, efficiency, and choice while ensuring its sustainability. Among the innovations he described were Germany's newly established Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care, which develops evidence-based guidelines and assesses the cost-effectiveness of new pharmaceuticals; financial incentives for patients to use primary care doctors as their point of entry into the system; and an electronic health card. A further highlight of the meeting was the third John M. Eisenberg, M.D., International Lecture, delivered by Mark McClellan, M.D., administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

C-SPAN and the Kaiser Network broadcast live the release of the results of the Fund's 2004 International Health

Policy Survey and the Ministers' Policy Roundtable. Fund vice presidents Cathy Schoen and Robin Osborn presented the 2004 survey findings, which were simultaneously published by *Health Affairs* as a "Web Exclusive."¹ The survey elicited the views of 1,400 adults in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the U.S., as well as an expanded U.K. sample of 3,000 adults (funded by The Health Foundation), on their experiences with primary and preventive care.

In all five countries, the survey found shortfalls in the delivery of safe, effective, timely, patient-centered, efficient and equitable care, with substantial variation among the nations. Patients in each country experienced problems accessing care when sick, with U.S. and Canadian adults the least likely to be able to see a doctor the same day and the most likely to use emergency rooms for non-emergency care. Up to 15 percent of patients who had a lab test in the past two years reported getting incorrect test results or a delay in receiving abnormal test results. On issues of doctor-patient communication, one of three or more respondents across the countries said their doctor does not tell them about treatment choices or ask for their opinion. U.S. patients were the most likely to have high out-of-pocket costs and to forgo care because of costs.

Access to doctor when sick or need medical attention



2004 Commonwealth Fund International Health Policy Survey.

In reacting to the findings, Andrew Bindman, M.D., of the University of California, San Francisco, emphasized the critical role of a strong primary care infrastructure in underpinning a high-performing health care system.

In a policy roundtable discussion, health ministers or their designates from Australia, Canada, Germany, Mexico, New Zealand, the U.K., and the U.S. had a candid exchange of views on such issues as health care quality, health system sustainability, and priorities. Senior policymakers and scholars then introduced national approaches to redesigning and improving the delivery of primary health care, ensuring same-

day appointments, coordinating care for chronically ill patients through learning collaboratives, and implementing electronic health records.

The last day of the symposium—which focused on opportunities for the U.S. to learn from international innovations—was held on Capitol Hill, with the cooperation of the Alliance for Health Reform. As panel reactors, congressional staff commented on the relevance and potential transferability of Germany’s disease management program, New Zealand’s no-fault medical malpractice system, and the U.K.’s use of financial incentives to improve quality of care.

Commissioned papers presented at the symposium will be submitted for consideration as part of a series of *Health Affairs* international Web Exclusive articles. The symposium is cosponsored by the journal in collaboration with founding editor John K. Iglehart.

U.S.–U.K. Meeting on Health Care Quality

In July 2004, the Fund and the London-based Nuffield Trust cosponsored “Improving Quality of Health Care in the United States and United Kingdom: Strategies for Change and Action, 2004,” the sixth in a series of meetings for senior U.S. and U.K. policymakers and quality experts. The gathering was further enriched by representatives from Australia and New Zealand. Held in New York City, the meeting addressed four topics: the use of contractual agreements and incentives to improve quality and efficiency, patient engagement and decision making, implementation of electronic medical records, and the role of professionalism in quality improvement.

The impressive results obtained by U.S., U.K., and Australian quality improvement collaboratives targeting diabetes, cancer, and depression provided a starting point for a dynamic and provocative cross-national exchange on the sustainability and spread of quality improvement efforts.

During the conference, Carolyn Clancy, M.D., director of the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and Sir Liam Donaldson, M.D., chief medical officer of the U.K. Department of Health, reported on the progress of the 2001 bilateral agreement between the U.S. and U.K. for collaboration on quality improvement and proposed an agenda for future efforts.

International Working Group on Quality Indicators

Since 1999, Gerard Anderson at Johns Hopkins University and the Fund's Robin Osborn have co-directed the International Working Group on Quality Indicators, a unique collaboration among government officials from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K., and the U.S.; leading quality experts; the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); the Nuffield Trust; the Institute of Medicine; and the Canadian Council of Health Services Accreditation. Chaired by Arnold Epstein, M.D., of the Harvard School of Public Health, the project has produced the first-ever set of 30 quality indicators for benchmarking and comparing health care system performance across countries. The findings, published in the May/June 2004 issue of *Health Affairs*, attracted wide media coverage, including the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Newsday*, National Public Radio, CNN, ABC, CBS, Fox News, *The Economist*, *Canadian Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *Independent*, and *Sydney Morning Herald*. The working group's report, published in June 2004, had 10,000 downloads from the Fund's Web site in the first week.²

In a collaboration with the Fund, the OECD is building on the Fund's work through its International Health Care Quality Indicators Project, also chaired by Dr. Epstein. OECD has expanded the project to include 21 countries and is further developing the scope and depth of the indicator set. This project was endorsed by health ministers at the OECD May

2004 ministerial meeting; the OECD is now securing the necessary funding to enable it to institutionalize the collection of international quality data.

Harkness Fellows in Health Care Policy

Aimed at developing promising health care policy researchers and practitioners in the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand, the Harkness Fellowships provide a unique opportunity to spend up to 12 months in the U.S., conduct a policy-oriented research study, gain firsthand exposure to managed care and other models of health care delivery, enhance methodological skills, and work with leading health policy experts. Selection committees in each country interview candidates and recommend fellows. Nicole Lurie, M.D., senior natural scientist and Paul O’Neill Alcoa Professor of Health Policy at the RAND Corporation, serves as the Fund’s senior fellowships advisor.

Harkness Fellows in Health Care Policy continue to generate articles based on their fellowship work. For example, U.K. Harkness Fellow Kieran Walshe (2000–01) co-authored a *Health Affairs* study with his U.S. mentor, Stephen M. Shortell of the University of California, Berkeley, that compared national systems for reporting and investigating major failures in health care organizations that result in harm to patients. Another article, by Canadian Harkness Associate Steven G. Morgan (2001–02) and colleagues, described British Columbia’s experience with its evidence-based approach to drug coverage. U.K. Fellow Ronald Gray (2002–03) published an article in *Pediatrics* with his U.S. mentor, Marie McCormick, M.D., that discussed findings from a longitudinal study on behavioral problems in low-birth-weight children. Malcolm Battersby, M.D., Australian Fellow (2003–04) published a report for the South Australian government on collaboratives for chronic illness. And 2003–04 Canadian Harkness Associate Alexandre Sirois’s interview on

pharmaceutical costs with Princeton University economist Uwe Reinhardt, who chairs the Fund's international coordinating committee, was published in Quebec's *La Presse*.

Fellows who have returned to their home countries continue to receive national recognition and assume influential posts in health care policy. In the U.K., Carmel Hughes (1998–99) was promoted to professor at the School of Pharmacy, Queen's University, while Ciaran O'Neill (2001–02) was promoted to professor of health economics and policy at the University of Ulster. Raymond Moynihan (1998–99), a reporter for the *Australian Financial Review*, served as guest editor for the *British Medical Journal*, and Alan Cass was made director of the policy and practice division of the George Institute for International Health in Sydney. In New Zealand, 2002–03 fellow Ngaire Kerse was promoted to associate professor of general practice and primary health care at the University of Auckland. Among Canadian Harkness Associates, Jennifer Zelmer (2002–03) was promoted to vice president for research and analysis at the Canadian Institute for Health Information, and Steven G. Morgan (2001–02) received the prestigious Canadian Institutes of Health Research New Investigator Career Award.

The sixth class of fellows (2003–04) completed a productive year, ending with a final reporting seminar in San Diego in June 2004. The year included several opportunities for fellows to meet with leading U.S. and international policy experts. In October, fellows attended the Fund's International Symposium on Health Care Policy and participated in a visit to AHRQ. A Washington policy briefing in February gave the fellows exposure to the political process and the views of a wide range of senior policymakers and stakeholders. Joining the Harkness fellows was a U.S. journalist from the Kaiser Media Fellowships in Health.

In May, the fellows traveled to Toronto and Ottawa for

briefings with senior government officials and health care leaders and a closer look at the Canadian health care system. Two Canadian Harkness Associates, selected in collaboration with the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, participated in the fellowship seminars, adding a valuable Canadian perspective.

The 2004–05 Harkness Fellows arrived in the U.S. beginning in August. With the support of The Health Foundation, the fellowships were expanded to include two U.K. Harkness/Health Foundation Fellows. Geared toward health care practitioners and senior civil servants involved directly in health policy, the Harkness/Health Foundation Fellowships aim to enrich health policy development and leadership in the U.K. The 2004–05 Harkness Fellows will undertake research projects under the guidance of a distinguished roster of U.S. and home country mentors. A publishable paper or report for senior policymakers is expected to result from each fellowship.

The 2004–05 Harkness Fellows are:



- **Jean-Marie Berthelot** (Canada)
Head and Senior Researcher, Statistics Canada
Project Title: *Health Services Use and Health Disparities: A U.S.–Canada Comparative Analysis*
Placement: Statistics Canada



- **Marie Bismark, M.B.Ch.B., LLB, MBHL** (New Zealand)
Legal Advisor and Researcher, Health and Disability Commissioner
Project Title: *Analysis of Hospital Adverse Events, Complaints and Compensation in New Zealand: Opportunities for U.S. Learning*
Placement: Harvard School of Public Health
Mentors: Troyen Brennan, M.D., J.D., Ph.D., and David Studdert, L.L.B., Sc.D., M.P.H.



- **Jane Burns, Ph.D.** (Australia)
Senior Program Manager, *beyondblue*: the national depression initiative
Project Title: *Prevention or Treatment in Adolescent Mental Health? A Comparison of U.S. and Australian Strategies and Approaches*

Placement: University of California, San Francisco
Mentors: Charles E. Irwin, Jr., M.D., and Claire Brindis, Dr.P.H.



- **Elana Taipapaki Curtis, M.B.Ch.B., Dip PH, M.P.H.** (New Zealand)
Public Health Medicine Specialist, National Screening Unit, Public Health Directorate, Ministry of Health
Project Title: *Ethnic Disparities in Breast Cancer Mortality and Survival: Understanding the Role of Access and Quality of Care*
Placement: University of California, San Francisco
Mentor: Andrew Bindman, M.D., and Rebecca Smith-Bindman, M.D.



- **Rhiannon Tudor Edwards, D.Phil., M.A.** (United Kingdom)
Director, Centre for the Economics of Health, and Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Medical and Social Care Research, University of Wales, Bangor
Project Title: *The Economics of Prevention in Health Care: The Business Case for Quality*
Placement: Group Health Cooperative of Puget Sound
Mentors: Edward Wagner, M.D., M.P.H., and Eric Larson, M.D., M.P.H.



- **Rachel Elliott, Ph.D., B.Pharm.** (United Kingdom)
Clinical Senior Lecturer, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Manchester
Project Title: *What Factors Influence Patients' Decisions to Adhere to Medicine and Are They Taken Account of in Health Policy?*
Placement: Harvard Medical School
Mentors: Stephen Soumerai, Sc.D., and Dana Safran, Sc.D.



- **Dominic Ford, M.A.** (United Kingdom)
Mental Health Operational Development Manager, Healthcare Commission
Project Title: *Performance Assessment in Mental Health Services: a User Perspective*
Placement: RAND Corporation
Mentors: Elizabeth McGlynn, Ph.D., and Kenneth Wells, M.D., M.P.H.



- **Stephen Monaghan, M.B.Ch.B., M.P.H., LLM** (United Kingdom)
Public Health Director, Cardiff Local Health Board, National Public Health Service (Wales)
Project Title: *How Well Do Incentives for Quality Work?*
Placement: RAND Corporation
Mentor: Paul Shekelle, M.D., Ph.D.



- **Nadeem Qureshi, M.B.B.S., M.Sc.** (United Kingdom)
Clinical Lecturer/General Practitioner, School of
Community Health Sciences, University of Nottingham
Project Title: *Anticipating and Preventing Inequalities in
Genetic Health Care Provision for
Vulnerable Minority Populations*
Placement: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Mentor: Muin J. Khoury, M.D., Ph.D.



- **Kathryn Rowan, D.Phil.** (United Kingdom)
Director, Intensive Care National Audit and Research
Center
Project Title: *A Comparison of Quality Initiatives in the
U.K. and the U.S.*
Placement: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Mentor: Carolyn Clancy, M.D., and Dan Stryer,
M.D.



- **Richard E. Scott, Ph.D.** (Canada)
Associate Professor, Department of Community Health
Sciences, University of Calgary
Project Title: *Assessing Issues and Solutions for E-Health
Policy Development in Six Countries*
Placement: Department of Community Health Sciences,
University of Calgary



- **Peter Sprivulis, M.B.B.S., Ph.D.** (Australia)
Clinical Director, Acute Demand Management Unit,
Department of Health, Government of Western Australia
Project Title: *The Business Case for Investment in
Quality: How Much Should We Spend on
Clinical Decision Support Systems?*
Placement: Brigham and Women's Hospital
Mentor: David W. Bates, M.D., M.Sc., and Donald
Berwick, M.D.



- **Claire Stebbing, M.B.B.S., M.A.** (United Kingdom)
Senior House Officer, Department of Paediatrics, Guys'
and St. Thomas' NHS Trust
Project Title: *Medication Errors in Children and an
Assessment of Strategies for Their
Prevention*
Placement: Brigham and Women's Hospital
Mentor: David W. Bates, M.D., M.Sc.

Packer Policy Fellowships, an Australian–American Health Policy Fellowship Program

The “reverse” Harkness Fellowship program established in 2002 by the Australian Department of Health and Ageing in collaboration with the Fund, was renamed the Packer Policy Fellowships in honor of Kerry Packer, chairman of Consolidated Press Holdings, Ltd. The Packer Policy Fellowships program is designed to enable two mid-career U.S. policy researchers or practitioners to spend up to 10 months in Australia conducting research and gaining an understanding of Australian health policy issues relevant to the U.S. Chaired by Andrew Bindman, M.D., the selection committee met in October 2004 and selected the second round of fellows:



- **Kristen Testa**, director of programs to increase health insurance coverage for children and families at The Children’s Partnership in California.
- **Keith McInnes**, project director of Cancer Care, a pilot project based at Harvard Medical School that uses electronic health records and information technology to improve the quality of care for cancer patients.



Partnerships with International Foundations

The Fund continues to seek and nurture partnerships with international foundations in order to expand and enrich its programs. In addition to the recent expansion of the Harkness Fellowships, the Fund’s partnership with The Health Foundation includes other areas of collaboration. Beginning with the 2004 International Health Policy Survey, The Health Foundation supports an expanded U.K. survey sample, making possible statistically significant comparisons between England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The foundation will also host a U.K. health policy symposium, modeled after the Fund’s own International Symposium, to bring together health

ministers and senior government officials from the four countries and to release the U.K. survey findings.

In the fall of 2002, the Fund joined the Bertelsmann International Network for Health Policy and Reform in a collaboration among 15 countries to share information on policy reforms, innovations, and best practices. Composed of independent experts from foundations and research institutions based in Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America, the network analyzes health sector reforms and trends in industrialized nations on a “real-time” basis. Reports are produced twice a year and disseminated to policymakers and, through the Internet, to a worldwide policy audience. The third meeting of the collaboration was held in Berlin in July 2004. In December 2004, the Bertelsmann Foundation partnered with the Fund and AcademyHealth to convene a meeting of senior U.S. and German government officials and leading policy experts to share innovative health care delivery and financing models for the coordination of care for people with chronic illnesses.

An ongoing collaboration between the Fund and the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation enables two Canadian Harkness Associates to participate in the fellowships program each year. In addition, the Fund continues to build on its longest-standing international partnership with the Nuffield Trust, with which the Fund has cosponsored the annual U.S.–U.K. Meeting on Health Care Quality since 1999.

Ian Axford Fellows, 2005

A further dimension of IHP is the Fund’s administration of the Ian Axford Fellowships in Public Policy. Established by the New Zealand government in conjunction with the private sector, the program provides opportunities for outstanding U.S. professionals working in a range of public policy areas—including health care, education, welfare reform, criminal

justice, employment, race relations, the environment, science and technology, and tax policy—to take six-month policy sabbaticals in New Zealand. Complementing the Harkness Fellowships, the program strengthens a growing network of international exchange on health and social policy issues. The Ian Axford Fellowships selection committee, chaired by Robert D. Reischauer, president of the Urban Institute, met in May and selected three 2005 fellows, who will begin their tenure in New Zealand in January 2005:



- **Nicholas Johnson**, director of the State Fiscal Project at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities



- **John O'Brien**, director of health policy studies in the Center for Health Program Development and Management at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County



- **Dena Ringold**, senior economist at the World Bank.

Research Projects and Other Activities

Through its Small Grants Program, the Fund supports efforts to learn from other countries' innovations. One of the 2004–05 grants supported international sessions at the 2004 AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, at which presentations were made on the Fund's International Working Group on Quality Indicators and OECD Quality Indicators project, lessons from abroad concerning the use of quality-improvement incentives, and results of the Fund's 2003 International Health Policy Survey of hospital executives. Small Grant support also enabled publication of the lead article in the May/June 2004 issue of *Health Affairs*, "U.S. Health

Care Spending in an International Context,” by Uwe E. Reinhardt, Peter S. Hussey, and Gerard F. Anderson. The study examined factors explaining high U.S. health care spending relative to other countries with much older populations, including disproportionately high administrative costs and the fragmented nature of the U.S. health system. Published in the same issue was an analysis of trends in international nurse migration, prepared by the University of Pennsylvania’s Linda Aiken and colleagues.

REFERENCES

1 C. Schoen, R. Osborn, P. T. Huynh, M. Doty, K. Davis, K. Zapert, and J. Peugh, “Primary Care and Health System Performance: Adults’ Experiences in Five Countries,” *Health Affairs* Web Exclusive (October 28, 2004).

2 First Report and Recommendations of the Commonwealth Fund’s International Working Group on Quality Indicators, The Commonwealth Fund, June 2004.