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Carolyn M. Clancy, MD, director of Agency for Health Care Research and Quality, presents keynote address at 2010 ACGME Annual Educational Conference

Dr. Clancy discusses AHRQ's focus on patient safety and information technology

CHICAGO, May 7, 2010 — In years to come, the public will demand a greater voice in how resident physicians are educated and physicians will focus even more on evidence-based medicine when treating patients with various health conditions, said Carolyn M. Clancy, MD, director of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, during the keynote speech she gave March 6 at the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education's 2010 Annual Educational Conference. The meeting took place March 4–7 at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel and Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee. About 1,600 program directors, program coordinators, designated institutional officials and others involved in graduate medical education attended the event.

In her address, "Building the 21st Century Learning Environment: Rules of the Road to Health Care Reform," Dr. Clancy discussed the mission and activities of the AHRQ and

highlighted some of its work in the areas of patient safety and information technology. She commended the ACGME for including public directors on its Board of Directors to provide the public's perspective on residency education.

The role of the AHRQ, an agency in the federal Department of Health and Human Services, is to improve the quality, safety, efficiency and effectiveness of patient care in the United States. The agency gathers data and provides grants to health care institutions, researchers and clinicians.

One of the AHRQ's priorities, Dr. Clancy said, is "to see which treatments work best for which patients under which circumstances." That can be achieved, she said, by aggregating data on best practices in medicine and increasing the knowledge base from which clinicians can draw.

"Most of the information that is culled is lost. If we can begin to collect that in a way patients trust, we can get a lot smarter, faster," said Dr. Clancy.

Dr. Clancy summarized the AHRQ's work in promoting the use of information technology and electronic medical records in health care. The AHRQ has invested \$200 million in information technology funding, she said, and has slated another \$32 million in its 2011 budget. The AHRQ has provided grants for projects focusing on the use of electronic medical records, electronic prescribing and other health care information technology tools.

However, health care information technology is not a panacea for improving health care quality, Dr. Clancy noted.

“Computers don’t improve quality. People improve quality. Computers are a useful tool,” she said.

In the area of patient safety, the AHRQ has launched several initiatives. The agency has created a web-based Patient Safety Network, which includes patients safety tools and resources, as well as a web-based morbidity and mortality journal called *AHRQ Web M&M*. In addition, the AHRQ has partnered with various patient safety organizations that collect and analyze patient safety data and encourage a culture of safety at health care institutions.

The AHRQ has also awarded more than \$5 million in health care simulation training grants.

“A new world awaits,” said Dr. Clancy in conclusion, “one with the creative and intelligent use of technology. Enlightenment will win out in the end.”

The 2011 ACGME Annual Educational Conference will be held March 3–6 at the Gaylord Opryland in Nashville, Tennessee.

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The ACGME is a private, non-profit organization that accredits approximately 8,800 residency programs in 130 specialties and subspecialties that educate 112,000 residents. Its mission is to improve the quality of health care in the United States by assessing and advancing the quality of resident physicians’ education through exemplary accreditation.