

**Inaugural Conference of the Wharton-TRI Center on the Organization and Management of Addiction Treatment**

**November 16-17, 2005**

**Treatment Research Institute, Philadelphia**

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COMAT's inaugural conference took place November 16 and 17, 2005 where approximately 30 researchers and industry and management specialists gathered for a diagnostic appraisal of the nation's addiction treatment system.

Consensus emerged around the distinguishing characteristics of substance abuse treatment systems that make change and performance improvement difficult to achieve:

- The target consumers of substance abuse treatment services do not want services.
- Value is often experienced by people who are NOT the patient.
- Almost all treatment programs are primarily funded by the public sector, and funding patterns are not sensitive to performance but to political imperatives.
- Excessive regulation and bureaucracy impede quality improvement efforts.
- Not enough is known about value realized through investment of dollars.
- There is a seeming conflict between the medical/accreditation model and the outcomes/expectations of the public.

Based upon these assumptions, participants agreed that structural change in the way substance abuse treatment is organized, financed, regulated and delivered is essential for the "industry" to evolve into one with high standards of quality and performance and ability to satisfy its "customers" (patients) as well as public sector stakeholders (members of society, their elected officials, and those who regulate the practice of addiction treatment). Conference participants agreed on the following priorities:

- **Encourage performance-based reimbursement rewarding desirable outcomes and process improvements** under different financing and organizational arrangements at a variety of levels (State, County, city, within city), and encourage **evaluation of results**.
- **Identify opportunities and create incentives for consolidation of specific functions** for small treatment providers, e.g., back room activities, joint purchasing. Similarly, **identify opportunities for mergers** among small treatment providers that expand the variety of services that can be provided within a single organization.
- **Work with States and Counties to create financial and administrative incentives and remove obstacles** to performance-based purchasing, consolidation and mergers.

- **Harness the power of CSAT** by identifying elements from its National Workforce Plan that converge with COMAT priorities.
- **Identify and work with additional partners** such as the NGA Center for Best Practices, the National Quality Forum, SAMHSA, NIDA and other groups that can address provider needs for new technology, minimal standards of care, standardized assessment, etc.
- **Position COMAT as an agent for communicating to states, legislatures and purchasers the critical need to implement performance measurement strategies.**