



The James A. Vohs Award for Quality

The second annual Permanente Journal special issue

Introduction and History

Our commitment to improving the health of our members is a driving force in the Kaiser Permanente (KP) dedication to quality improvement. With our integrated health system and defined population of members, we are in a unique position to continually explore opportunities to refine the care we provide. By focusing on new or improved ways to deploy the right care at the right time, we enhance the health of our members, build upon our existing reputation as a provider of quality health care, and improve service and cost-effectiveness of care for our members and group customers.

During his 17 years as President, CEO, and Chairman of the Boards of Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc, and Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, James A. Vohs continually emphasized the moral and strategic importance of quality and quality improvement. On the event of his retirement as Chairman of the Board, the James A. Vohs Award for Quality was established by the Boards to recognize and honor projects that advance the quality of care, showcase innovative techniques and knowledge that can be transferred throughout the Program, and underscore the value of multidisciplinary teamwork.

The Vohs Award recognizes exceptional KP efforts to address quality-of-care issues and acknowledges multidisciplinary team efforts representing Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc, Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, and the Medical Groups. As before, the criteria for selecting a winner assure that the project measurably improves patient care and has the potential for transfer as a "successful practice," thereby benefiting many members across the Program. The Vohs Award is designed to encourage projects that demonstrate leadership within KP and the health care industry, and that develop and apply new approaches to improve quality of care.

Annually, each KP Division is invited to nominate one or two projects for consideration for the James A. Vohs Award for Quality. The award is presented for the project that best represents a well-established effort to significantly improve quality through substantial, objectively documented, and institutionalized changes in direct patient care, through either new programs or significant improvements in existing ones.

We present here the 2000 winners of the Vohs award: the first-place winner, "Bright Systems®: A Total Quality Management Project to Improve Children's Health," from KPNC of the California Division; the one that received honorable mention, "The Childhood/Adolescent Immunization Program with accompanying Immunization Toolkit," from the Denver/Boulder Local Market of the KP Colorado Region; and several other outstanding Quality Program Descriptions which were submitted, including "Achieving Positive Outcomes through Collaborative Pharmaceutical Care—the KPNW Medication Management Program," "Improvement of Cardiac Outcomes from the KP Ohio Region," "Asthma Disease Management" from the Denver/Boulder Local Market of the KP Colorado Region, and "The Breast Health and Cancer Detection Program" from the KP Georgia Region.

In addition to presenting the basic elements of each program, we hope to remind the reader of the Vohs Award application process to stimulate similar project development on diverse topics throughout our organization. Multidisciplinary involvement and strong team leadership is critical to the success of these projects. Just as the quality planning process and methods for making programs operational served as the framework for several other successful program rollouts within the Local Markets, all programs described should serve as a model for quality improvement programs throughout Kaiser Permanente nationally.

Incentive is provided to all TPMG/KP professional staff to apply for the James A. Vohs Quality Improvement Award. There is no monetary gift with this award. The winning Division receives an engraved award, and project team members receive awards. The "real" award is recognition for good work. Winners and runners-up are invited to present their projects at a reception hosted by the Boards of Directors, Division Presidents, and other Program Officers. The awardees also receive publicity through the *Quality Notes* newsletter and through local, state, and national press releases.

The local level process for nomination varies. Each Division has contact liaisons, who can be located through their quality representative. Each Division also has a screening and review process for potential nominees. Nominations are signed off by the Division President and Medical Director. Nominations and applications are due September 1st each year.

A Vohs Award Selection Committee consists of two to three Boards of Directors members, a Vohs family member, Chairman Bob Crane, two to three Program Office quality representatives, one Permanente Federation representative, and two non-voting Program Office quality representatives, who serve as staff to the Committee. This Committee announces its selection at the Board of Directors meeting in December. Notification is made to the Division President and Medical Director by phone after that meeting. Team members are contacted by phone within the next day or two. The recognition ceremony takes place at the March Board of Directors' meeting.

We thus hope that the following entries for this year's James A. Vohs Award will serve as models to motivate all KP staff to present projects for consideration and motivate us to continually improve the process of providing direct patient care and access to health information for our members. ❖