

POPULATION HEALTH STRATEGY & INTERVENTION

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Points of Interest

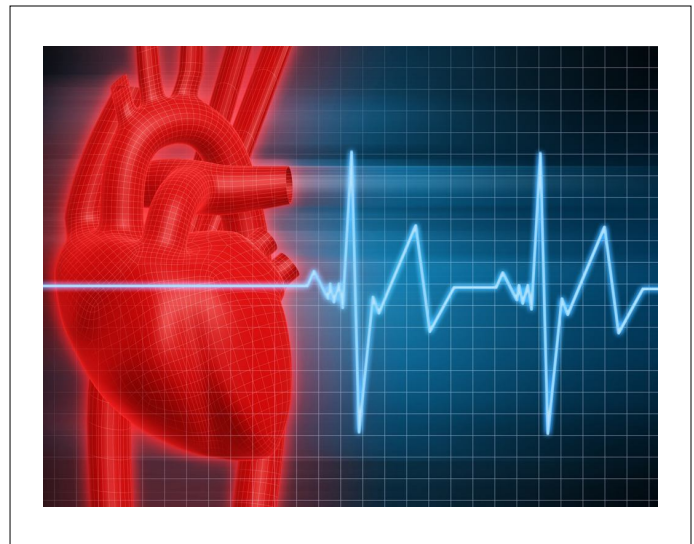
- ARRA focuses on changes in clinical practice.
- Pragmatic clinical trials can address questions about healthcare interventions.
- Chronic disease and associated co-morbid conditions require further investigation towards improving healthcare outcomes.

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COMPARATIVE EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH

By Dr. Mathew Maurer, Medical Director

Comparative Effectiveness Research (CER) is defined as “the conduct and synthesis of research comparing the benefits and harms of different interventions and strategies to prevent, diagnose, treat and monitor health conditions in ‘real world’ settings.” Such research has become a focus of recent government funding activities under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) of 2009. The intent of these efforts is to support research activities that focus on the analysis and eventual translation of approaches into clinical practice and decision-making that will improve the care of a targeted, specific population or subgroup and/or the population at large. Such studies are believed to be particularly helpful in providing clinical insights into health problems that afflict a relatively heterogeneous population, such as chronic



“The heart beat and pulse of healthcare interventions.”

conditions that afflict older adults. One goal of such endeavors is to identify subgroups that might particularly benefit from a particular clinical approach.

CER involves the performance of pragmatic clinical trials, also called a practical clinical trials, in which the hypothesis and study design are formulated based on information needed to make a decision, for example how best to manage an older adult with heart failure. Such an ap-

proach is distinguished from explanatory trials in which the goal is to better understand how and why an intervention works. Explanatory trials are designed to maximize the chance that some biological effect of a new treatment, such as a novel compound or new device, will be revealed by the study. The pragmatic clinical trial, on the other hand, addresses practical questions about interventions as they would occur in routine clinical practice. In the case of

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managing and older adult with heart failure, co-morbid conditions such as depression, sleep disordered breathing, anemia, and low physical activity, among others may be contributing or causing the observed phenotype. A practical clinical trial in this arena will investigate whether screening, identification and intervention of any or all of these co-morbid conditions may be warranted. Additional questions that could be ad-

ressed by such an approach include, what is the correct order for treatment to be most successful, which patients benefit the most from a particular intervention and which health professionals are best suited to evaluate and manage patients in a high quality, yet cost effective manner. Practical clinical trials often enroll a broader patient population than explanatory clinical trails and thus their generalizability is usually larger,

In short, comparative or clinical effectiveness studies better represent decisions facing policymakers in which it is imperative to determine if differences are present between existing “standard practice” and newer, at times more expensive alternative interventions. At PsiMedica, we are interested in supporting our clients in addressing the important issues they face through comparative effectiveness research.

