

WE NEED DATA TO TELL OUR STORY!

by **Russ Bodoff**

NHIA President

Despite our around-the-clock efforts to gain a meaningful Medicare home infusion benefit, one glaring flaw continues to handicap our endeavor—the lack of industry-defining data. We desperately need data that clearly demonstrates the high-quality and cost-effective alternative that we know home infusion to be, when compared to other patient care settings. Yet, it is extremely difficult to get our message across effectively when we lack basic data on something as simple as the total number of patients being treated. However, we now have a golden opportunity to ease that burden and generate significant benefits to the field, as we commence the **NHIA Industry-Wide Data Initiative** this month, with the launch of **Phase I** of that major project on January 27th—the **2010 NHIA Provider Survey**.

Providers have always recognized the need to track their progress in areas relating to the strategic, clinical and operational arms of their businesses. Gaining such data-driven insights and building effective tools to assess and guide financial, operational and human resource performance are critical to individual company success. But the time has now come to take those individual efforts to the next level—to industry-wide measurements and benchmarking. Having the ability to benchmark industry best practices offers companies an opportunity to compare their performance with industry norms—and make the necessary strategic decisions that will keep their business relevant. Industry-defining data will also assist the business firms that support our field to better understand the industry's needs and opportunities, turning that knowledge into products and services that bring value to their customers.

We must admit to ourselves that data collection will not be easy. Completion of various components of the Data Initiative (beginning with the **NHIA 2010 Provider Survey**) will require a time commitment to gather and submit the critical information being requested. And while our past tells a story about the difficulties in moving such an effort forward, I am confident that this time will be different for three main reasons:

- First, the dramatic changes taking place in health care, including the movement toward a value-based reimbursement model, will require providers to justify payment for services rendered via their patient outcomes. The need for clinical benchmarking and industry-specific standards of care have never been greater—and the collaboration of all industry stakeholders will be required to meet this emerging reality.
- Second, the 12 provider companies represented on the NHIA Board of Directors have all committed to fully participating in the NHIA Industry-Wide Data Initiative, providing our endeavor with a strong foundation of data upon which to build.
- Third, I am hoping that each of you is as upset as I am that we are told that staff at CMS (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services) and the CBO (Congressional Budget Office) believe that home infusion would not provide any savings to the Medicare program—and, instead, would bring additional costs. I know they are wrong, you know they are wrong, and it is time that we clearly demonstrate via data that we are right, so that our Medicare-eligible patients receive the cost-effective option of home infusion therapy.

In the last issue of *INFUSION*, you learned about our far-reaching Data Initiative—the industry-wide response to this lack of data that goes far beyond our legislative needs, with the potential to impact how we clinically care for patients. This initiative is being developed with assistance from several working committees, under the direction of the NHIA Board of Directors and the Future of Infusion Advisory Council (FIAC), and will be an ongoing project conducted in several phases.

As mentioned above, Phase I, the NHIA 2010 Provider Survey, launches on January 27 and will help define the size and scope of the home infusion industry—setting the stage for the next phase of the survey project (and beyond). Phase II, anticipated to begin in late 2010, will gather more in-depth information and bring providers closer to benchmarking their clinical and operational performance against the performance of their peers.

Preliminary data from the Phase I Survey will be discussed at the 2010 NHIA Annual Conference in Dallas—I strongly encourage you to make sure your organization is represented in those results. We have established stringent procedures at NHIA to ensure confidentiality of all the data submitted, and welcome the opportunity to discuss any concerns you may have about participating in this important endeavor. Please visit our Data Initiative website at www.nhia.org/data for additional information, or to contact staff with any questions or concerns.

In closing, I urge your company to make the time to participate in the survey process. It will benefit your company, it will benefit the field and it will benefit your patients. In advance, I'd like to thank you for your help and support with this critical initiative—a successful Phase I is crucial to our ultimate, overall success.

Best regards,

