

# MetaStar: Celebrating 40 Years of Improving Health Care

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The year was 1973 and the top song on the Billboard charts was “Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree” by Tony Orlando and Dawn. President Nixon released the Watergate tapes and withdrew the last troops from Vietnam. Billie Jean King defeated Bobby Riggs in tennis. The Sears Tower was completed in Chicago, measuring 1454 feet tall. The US Supreme Court rendered a decision on *Roe v Wade*. Skylab, the first American space station, was launched. And Nuclear Magnetic Resonance, the technology behind Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanning, was developed.

Just as the world has changed since 1973, so has health care. We are using new approaches and techniques, along with technology, to improve the ways we care for our patients and their families.

In Wisconsin, 1973 was the year 2 organizations were established under the new federal Professional Standards Review Organization (PSRO) program: the Foundation for Medical Care Evaluation of Southeastern Wisconsin (FMCE) and the Wisconsin Professional Review Organization (WisPRO). In 1984, with the transformation of the PSRO program into the Peer Review Organization (PRO) program, the organizations merged to become the Wisconsin Peer Review Organization (WIPRO). The PRO program soon would be transformed to employ a quality improvement approach to health

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care. In 1996 WIPRO reorganized and began using the name MetaStar, which can be taken to mean “guiding change.”

As we mark our 40th year, MetaStar is proud to have spent the last 4 decades with the mission to effect positive change in the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of health care.

“We have successfully used state, federal, and private support to push the envelope of health care quality improvement across Wisconsin for 40 years while remaining independent and true to our mission,” said Greg Simmons, CEO of MetaStar.

As both health care and MetaStar have evolved over the years, so has the concept of quality in health care.

“Forty years ago, quality was evaluated almost entirely by expert or peer opinion,” said Simmons. “Since then, by applying the principles of science-based measurement and continuous improvement, we are much more capable of measuring quality objectively and of using those measurements to elicit improvements.”

Simmons pointed out that quality in some areas, where the science is unambiguous, has improved markedly. In others, the improvement has been incremental. And there is still a lot to be done.

MetaStar’s focus continues to be on quality improvement in health care services through



collaborative efforts with hospitals, clinics, physicians, and other caregivers.

“Since our inception we have realized that all of our work—our very mission itself—depends upon a solid grounding in science and professionalism if it is to be credible and effective,” said Simmons. “Likewise, it is

essential to incorporate the perspective of the people delivering care on the front line. It is crucial for us to have physicians and other health care professionals on our team.”

As we look toward the future, MetaStar is ready to continue “guiding change” as we improve the quality and safety of health care. And we know it will be a challenge. MetaStar will continue to follow the basic principles of continuous quality improvement, collaboration with clinicians as the most effective way to produce lasting change, and the application of evidence-based health care science.

“Even in areas where medicine knows the right thing to do, the system may fail to do it 20% to 30% of the time,” said Simmons. “It has been estimated that there is solid science behind only about 30% of what we do in medical care. This means we are doing a lot that doesn’t help people and may even hurt them. Organizations like MetaStar, along with physicians and other health care practitioners, must continue to work together in order to produce higher-quality care, controlled costs, and improved health of the population.”

Doctor Gold is senior vice president and chief medical officer for MetaStar, Inc.

advancing the art & science of medicine in the midwest

**WMJ**

The mission of *WMJ* is to provide a vehicle for professional communication and continuing education for Midwest physicians and other health professionals.

*WMJ* (ISSN 1098-1861) is published by the Wisconsin Medical Society and is devoted to the interests of the medical profession and health care in the Midwest. The managing editor is responsible for overseeing the production, business operation and contents of the *WMJ*. The editorial board, chaired by the medical editor, solicits and peer reviews all scientific articles; it does not screen public health, socioeconomic, or organizational articles. Although letters to the editor are reviewed by the medical editor, all signed expressions of opinion belong to the author(s) for which neither *WMJ* nor the Wisconsin Medical Society take responsibility. *WMJ* is indexed in Index Medicus, Hospital Literature Index, and Cambridge Scientific Abstracts.

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