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Report compares health plans in Virginia

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Just in time for many consumers' health insurance open enrollment period, Virginia Health Information Inc. released a report comparing health maintenance organizations in the state.

The report includes information on member satisfaction, prenatal and postpartum care, avoiding antibiotics, immunizations, financial information and care of various conditions, including mental health, depression, diabetes, high blood pressure, rheumatoid arthritis, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and asthma, among other things.

Consumers "can use this information to compare HMOs on issues important to them," said Michael T. Lundberg, Virginia Health Information executive director.

"This is very helpful to employers, too. They can see independent rankings of HMOs that are unbiased that are based on nationally developed standards and State Corporation Commission's Bureau of Insurance filings."

Optima Health topped the list for members highly rating their personal doctor or nurse at 86 percent. Aetna Health Inc. fell to the bottom at 71 percent.

Optima also ranked highest for follow-up of mental illness hospitalization within a week of discharge, at 77 percent. CIGNA HealthCare of the Mid-Atlantic Inc. was lowest at 51 percent.

Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Mid-Atlantic States Inc. led the way with 82 percent of qualified women receiving breast cancer screenings. Optimum Choice Inc. had the lowest participation with 63 percent.

About 72 percent of qualified CIGNA HealthCare of the Mid-Atlantic Inc. plan members underwent colorectal cancer screenings, while UnitedHealthcare of the Mid-Atlantic Inc. came in lowest at 55 percent.

This report will come in handy in the coming years as health insurance exchanges are formed as part of federal health reform, Lundberg said.

"We believe this type of information is exactly what consumers want, along with pricing and descriptions of health

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plan coverage, so they can make more informed decisions," he said.

The report is available at vhi.org/hmo_compare.asp.

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