

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN MEDICAL SCHOOL
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL MEDICINE

Timothy P. Hofer, M.D., Associate Professor of Internal Medicine, with tenure, Department of Internal Medicine, Medical School, is recommended for promotion to Professor of Internal Medicine, with tenure, Department of Internal Medicine, Medical School.

Academic Degrees:

MSc.	1991	University of Michigan
M.D.	1985	University of California, San Francisco
A.B.	1980	Harvard University

Professional Record:

2000-Present Associate Professor of Internal Medicine, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Dr. Hofer has made substantial contributions to research training. He is extremely active in both formal classroom instruction and in mentoring fellows, especially with respect to study design, data analysis and biostatistics. He has worked extensively with both Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars and K awardees. Dr. Hofer has mentored several successful investigators who now have strong and independent research programs. Dr. Hofer has freely and generously volunteered his time to these activities and his contributions have been invaluable. Numerous fellows have gone out of their way to note how helpful he has been. In addition to these contributions, he was instrumental in creating courses for the Medical School's new MSc degree program in Health and Health Care Research, and his teaching in this program has been critical to its ongoing success.

Research: Dr. Hofer's research career has flourished at the University of Michigan. He has received independent extramural funding and has 65 peer-reviewed publications. Dr. Hofer's research centers on measuring and improving quality of care in the complex patient with a focus on physician and hospital performance measures. His interests lie in the methodological and practical issues in measuring and profiling quality of care and how the ability to measure quality may affect popular policy initiatives to identify and reduce medical errors or set up pay for performance systems. He has provided evidence that, while pay for performance systems may be successfully aimed at provider groups or clinics, they make little sense at the individual provider level, and that estimates of deaths due to medical errors are substantially over stated with a concomitant risk of distorted incentives for programs to ameliorate this perceived risk. Dr. Hofer clearly demonstrated that early readmission rates and DRG-specific mortality rates were neither sufficiently sensitive nor specific to differentiate high and low quality hospitals. Subsequently, in a highly cited article published in *JAMA*, Dr. Hofer delineated the major shortcomings of "report cards" for individual physicians as a reliable means of assessing quality of care. More recently, Dr. Hofer has exposed the limitations of administrative data in assessing quality of care.

Fundamentally, the set of problems that he has identified has to do with the relatively large amounts of measurement error that are inherent to virtually all methods of measuring the quality of healthcare. Traditionally, in biomedical research, while measurement error may be quantified in order to select or refine a measurement procedure, once it is considered acceptably low it is generally ignored in the remainder of any analyses. In the social sciences, plagued with measuring less tangible constructs, the approach to measurement error has been much more sophisticated. His methodologic sophistication has highlighted the limitations of many popular approaches to these critical issues as they apply to health systems and physicians.

Dr. Hofer's fundamental interest in the working generalist physician is also apparent in his paper asking why it is that primary care physicians do not always do what is recommended in the multiple guidelines they are mandated to follow. The relative priority practicing physicians assign to some mandates differs from the knowledge-based recommendations. The absolute number of things we ask physicians to do is greater than can be accomplished given the average visit duration. While many have commented that jamming too much in the primary care visit may be counter productive, Dr. Hofer went out and empirically examined the issue in a manner that sought to really understand why practice varied so greatly. This study is perhaps most obviously emblematic of Hofer's scholarly and professional "niche." While others have explored variation in medical practice and costs, Dr. Hofer has been trying to understand practice variation among physicians, always within the context of what is "known" and what is established.

Dr. Hofer has an international reputation as is obvious from the symposia he has given to European audiences focusing on the issue of provider profiling. Developing and applying "benchmarks" in the National Health Services in the UK is a significant agenda item under the reforms that have been in play for a number of years now, so the fact that he was invited to the UK to give important talks to methodologists grappling with these issues at the University of Birmingham and the Royal College of Physicians is impressive.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Render ML, Kim HM, Deddens J, Sivaganesin S, Welsh DE, Bickel K, Freyberg R, Timmons S, Johnston J, Connors AF Jr, Wagner D, Hofer TP: Variation in outcomes in Veterans Affairs intensive care units with a computerized severity measure. *Crit Care Med*;33(5):930-9, 2005.

Hofer TP, Asch SM, Hayward RA, Rubenstein LV, Hogan MM, Adams J, Kerr EA: Profiling quality of care: Is there a role for peer review? *BMC Health Serv Res* 4(1):9, 2004.

Hofer TP, Zemencuk JK, Hayward RA: When there is too much to do: how practicing physicians prioritize among recommended interventions. *J Gen Intern Med* 19(6):646-53, 2004.

Heisler M, Vijan S, Anderson RM, Ubel PA, Bernstein SJ, Hofer TP: When do patients and their physicians agree on diabetes treatment goals and strategies, and what difference does it make? *J Gen Intern Med* 18(11):893-902, 2003.

Hayward RA, Hofer TP: Estimating hospital deaths due to medical errors: preventability is in the eye of the reviewer. *JAMA* 286(4):415-20, 2001.

Service: Dr. Hofer has been an active reviewer for many major journals. He was recognized as being in the top 5% of reviewers for the leading health services research journal, *Medical Care* from 1996-2001. Perhaps most importantly, he is currently a member of the Department of Veteran's Affairs (DVA) Health Information Services Executive Board for the VA health data systems which clearly has a strategic planning role for the DVA ensuring that the VA Health System continues to be at the "cutting edge" of the health information system. He's had a long history of devoting his time and energy to VA health data systems, having advised the VA Office of Performance Management and served on the VISN 11 Information Management Committee. Dr. Hofer shared his expertise with the National Committee for Quality Assurance, focusing on the merits and dangers of physician benchmarking. He is an active member of the International Conference on Health Policy Research, having served on the Program Planning Committee twice for its biennial meeting concurrent with the American Statistical Association.

External Review:

Reviewer A: "Dr. Hofer has established a well deserved, national reputation for his work related to the measurement of quality of care....Dr. Hofer is also a truly outstanding mentor. He has been an advisor or primary mentor for a number of outstanding faculty members at the University of Michigan....In short, Dr. Hofer is a superb investigator whose work is having an important influence on the development and application of quality measures both within the Department of Veterans Affairs and nationally."

Reviewer B: "He has made significant contributions in his chose arena of research, has disseminated those in significant outlets and has established and maintained an independently funded program of research for the past decade or more. His contributions to the VA health services research agenda have been considerable and he has sought to blend his methodological interests to real applied needs in the VA health system."

Reviewer C: "...In regard to his rank among peers, he is among the leaders in his area of expertise...He brings a unique set of methodological skills to his mentoring – which is apparently highly valued as trainees continue to appear to seek him out as a K23, K12, or K30 mentor."

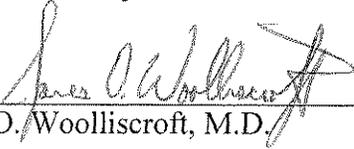
Reviewer D: "...I see the impact of the kind of work Dr. Hofer excels at, in which practical quality measurement and improvement approaches are subjected to in-depth investigation of their methodological and statistical underpinnings, as increasingly critical both [in] the field of health services research and to clinical medicine. It requires both clinical and methodological expertise at a high level to carry out this kind of work, and Dr. Hofer has both. His accomplishments are well-recognized nationally and internationally."

Reviewer E: "Dr. Hofer is nationally and internationally recognized for his substantive and methodological contributions to the assessment of quality of health care....His research has made substantial contributions to our understanding of issues related to performance measurement, and his work offers insights on how such assessments might be used to improve the quality of health care in the United States. Beyond his own research, Tim is clearly a valued colleague who enhances the success of many junior and senior investigators."

Reviewer F: “I certainly believe that Dr. Hofer’s reputation for scientific rigor would be highly valued, as would his successes with several stellar trainees and his willingness to confront – with strong methodological approaches – complicated and challenging research questions.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Dr. Hofer has gained national and international recognition and acclaim for his research in measuring quality of care and patient safety. He has made significant methodological contributions, has disseminated his work in leading journals, and has maintained a funded program of research for the past decade. Additionally, he has contributed substantially to our educational programs, mentoring junior faculty and fellows, and helping to design and teach a new Masters Program at the Medical School. Thus, we enthusiastically recommend Timothy Hofer, M.D., for promotion to Professor, with tenure, in the Department of Internal Medicine.



James O. Woolliscroft, M.D.

Dean

Lyle C. Roll Professor of Medicine

May 2008