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Health Data Liberator Award Honors Work to Help Consumers Make Smarter Choices

Award winner Robert Krughoff is the founder and president of the Center for the Study of Services /Consumers' Checkbook, an independent non-profit organization that improves transparency in health care and promotes greater consumer understanding of health care information.

WASHINGTON, DC -- Today [AcademyHealth](#) announced Robert Krughoff as the winner of this year's Health Data Liberator award. The award recognizes his work to liberate and publicly report data to help consumers make smarter choices.

"We've come a long way when it comes to consumers having access to hospital, doctor and health plan ratings," said Dr. Lisa Simpson, president and CEO of AcademyHealth. "But we wouldn't be at this point if it weren't for the tireless efforts of data liberators like Bob. His work has helped make it possible for consumers to make smarter choices about their health care for decades."

Krughoff, who was the first director of the Office of Research and Evaluation Planning in what was then known as the U.S. Department of Health Education and Welfare, launched the [Center for the Study of Services](#) in 1974 to conduct, encourage and publicly report studies on the quality of services available to the public. Since then, its publication [Consumers' Checkbook](#) has reported on health care services cost and quality across settings including hospital emergency departments, nursing homes, health plans, and pharmacies' prices.

Krughoff was also instrumental in the release of Medicare claims data identified at the physician level. The release of the data in 2014 led to the creation of Checkbook's [Surgeon Ratings](#), a website based on analyses of data on more than five million surgeries done in hospital by more than 50,000 surgeons. It shows consumers which surgeons' patients Checkbook found had the lowest (or highest) rates of deaths, prolonged lengths of stay, or need to be readmitted to hospital, after risk-adjustments for patient characteristics.

Checkbook has invented many other consumer information products and systems and has won various awards including the National Press Club's First Place Award for Excellence in Consumer Journalism, the Consumer Federation of America's Consumer Service Award, the National Quality Forum's Consumers and Patients for Quality Award, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Plan Choice Challenge. The organization is also active in other parts of the health care field, with national guides including [Guide to Health Plans for Federal Employees](#), [Guide to Top Doctors](#), and [Consumers' Guide to Hospitals](#).

"Data liberation doesn't happen unless people believe strongly in the idea and are creative in finding ways to make it happen," Krughoff said. "We had our share of obstacles and future liberators will face different ones. It's reassuring to be amongst a community like this at [Health] Datapalooza where innovators are hard at work, pushing us all to adjust so we're prepared to overcome whatever barriers to open and useful data the future brings."



The Health Data Liberator Award, presented each year at [Health Datapalooza](#), recognizes extraordinary contributions to the liberation of health data that fosters improvement in the health care system. Prior recipients include [Sarah Telford and Ahmadou Dicko of Humanitarian Data Exchange](#) (2018); [Tom Delbanco and Jan Walker of OpenNotes](#) (2017); Fred Trotter, CEO, DocGraph (2016); Niall Brennan, former director and chief data officer, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (2015); Charles Ornstein, senior reporter, ProPublica (2014); and Nirav Shah, senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Kaiser Permanente (2013).

About AcademyHealth

AcademyHealth is a leading national organization serving the fields of health services and policy research and the professionals who produce and use this important work. Together with our members, we offer programs and services that support the development and use of rigorous, relevant and timely evidence to increase the quality, accessibility, and value of health care, to reduce disparities, and to improve health. A trusted broker of information, AcademyHealth brings stakeholders together to address the current and future needs of an evolving health system, inform health policy, and translate evidence into action. Learn more at www.academyhealth.org and follow us on Twitter @AcademyHealth.

About Health Datapalooza

Health Datapalooza is a national conference focused on liberating health data, and bringing together the companies, startups, academics, government agencies, and individuals with the newest and most innovative and effective uses of health data to improve patient outcomes. Learn more at www.healthdatapalooza.org and follow us on Twitter @HDPalooza.