DEFINING HIGH-QUALITY OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES
Observational Studies Can Inform Health Decisions—When Done Correctly

WHAT MAKES OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES HIGH QUALITY?
New research gives us an idea.

- 2 items are addressed and have agreement across standards and guidelines
  - Defining study objectives and research questions
  - Including details on data sources

- 12 items are addressed but disagree across standards and guidelines, such as
  - Describing study limitations
  - Handling missing data
  - Addressing bias

- 9 items are addressed by some but not all standards and guidelines, such as
  - Reviewing prior research
  - Involving stakeholders in research
  - Assessing heterogeneity of treatment effects

WHAT DID THEY FIND?

- 2 items are addressed and have agreement across standards and guidelines
- 12 items are addressed but disagree across standards and guidelines, such as
- 9 items are addressed by some but not all standards and guidelines, such as

LACK OF COMMON STANDARDS FOR HIGH-QUALITY OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES CAN IMPACT

- Funding support
- Researchers apply
- Journal editors publish
- Patients, providers, and payers use

HOW DO WE AGREE ON WHAT “GOOD” LOOKS LIKE?
AUTHORS RECOMMEND 4 STEPS

1. GAIN ALIGNMENT
   Perspectives may differ, but what items are included should not

2. AGREE ON LEVELS OF CONSENSUS
   Minimum standards rather than best practices are most achievable

3. GARNER CONSENSUS
   Stakeholders should converge in an iterative process to gain consensus

4. ENCOURAGE CONSENSUS
   Voluntary adoption is most likely for success