

Hospital CAHPS[®] (HCAHPS[®])

CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES and AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE RESEARCH AND QUALITY

FACT SHEET

June 22, 2005

Overview

The intent of the HCAHPS initiative is to provide a standardized survey instrument and data collection methodology for measuring patients' perspectives on hospital care. While many hospitals currently collect information on patients' satisfaction with care, there is no national standard for collecting or publicly reporting this information that would enable valid comparisons to be made across all hospitals. In order to make "apples to apples" comparisons to support consumer choice, it is necessary to introduce a standard measurement approach. HCAHPS can be viewed as a core set of questions that can be combined with a broader, customized set of hospital-specific items. HCAHPS is meant to complement the data hospitals currently collect to support improvements in internal customer services and quality related activities.

Three broad goals have shaped the HCAHPS survey. First, the survey is designed to produce comparable data on the patient's perspective on care that allows objective and meaningful comparisons between hospitals on domains that are important to consumers. Second, public reporting of the survey results is designed to create incentives for hospitals to improve their quality of care. Third, public reporting will serve to enhance public accountability in health care by increasing the transparency of the quality of hospital care provided in return for the public investment. With these goals in mind, the HCAHPS project has taken substantial steps to assure that the survey will be credible, useful, and practical. This methodology and the information it generates will be made available to the public.

HCAHPS[®] Development

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has partnered with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), another agency in the Department of Health and Human Services, to develop HCAHPS. AHRQ has carried out a rigorous, scientific process to develop and test the HCAHPS instrument. This process has entailed a public call for measures; review of existing literature; cognitive interviews; consumer focus groups; stakeholder input; public response to several Federal Register notices; and a three-state pilot test in Arizona, Maryland, and New York. The current version of the HCAHPS

instrument and administration protocol reflects additional input and feedback from public comments, consumer testing, and small-scale field tests.

The HCAHPS instrument is composed of questions that encompass seven key topics: communication with doctors, communication with nurses, responsiveness of hospital staff, cleanliness and noise level of the physical environment, pain control, communication about medicines, and discharge information. It also includes additional items for adjusting the mix of patients across hospitals, which is done for analytical purposes.

In May 2005, the 27-item HCAHPS survey was formally endorsed by the National Quality Forum (NQF), a voluntary consensus standard-setting organization established to standardize healthcare quality measurement and reporting. The NQF endorsement represents the consensus of more than 240 healthcare providers, consumer groups, professional associations, purchasers, federal agencies, and research and quality organizations. Upon the recommendation of the NQF, CMS is further examining the costs and benefits of HCAHPS. This cost-benefit analysis of HCAHPS is being conducted by Abt Associates.

Once the cost-benefit analysis has been completed and reviewed by the CMS Administrator, any necessary changes will be incorporated into the HCAHPS instrument and implementation strategy. Then a packet will be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget's Paperwork Reduction Act process to complete the OMB clearance process. As part of this process, a final Federal Register Notice will be published to solicit public comment.

National Implementation

Training for the implementation of the HCAHPS survey is planned for late Summer 2005. There will be training sessions in select sites around the country. All survey vendors planning to administer HCAHPS will be required to attend a training session, as will hospitals planning to conduct HCAHPS on their own.

A "dry run" of HCAHPS is planned for Fall 2005. In the dry run, vendors/hospitals will begin collecting HCAHPS data and reporting it to CMS, which will adjust the data for patient-mix and mode of administration and then provide an opportunity for hospitals to review their data. The data collected during the dry-run period, however, will not be publicly reported.

Hospitals will voluntarily implement HCAHPS under the auspices of the Hospital Quality Alliance, a private/public partnership that includes the major hospital associations, government, consumer groups, measurement and accrediting bodies, and other stakeholders who share a common interest in reporting on hospital quality. The first full national implementation of HCAHPS is planned for 2006. This will be followed by the first public reporting of HCAHPS results on the Hospital Compare website, found at www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov, or through a link on www.medicare.gov.

For More Information

To learn more about HCAHPS, please visit the following Web sites:

- For general information: www.cms.hhs.gov/quality/hospital or www.ahrq.gov
- To sign up for the HCAHPS listserv: www.ahrq.gov/qual/cahpsix.htm

To Provide Comments or Ask Questions:

- To communicate with CMS staff via e-mail: hospitalcahps@cms.hhs.gov
- To communicate with AHRQ staff via e-mail: Hospital-CAHPS@ahrq.gov

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