

Hospital CAHPS[®] (HCAHPS[®])

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

FACT SHEET Updated February 19, 2004

Quality health care for people with Medicare is a high priority for President Bush, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). In November 2001, HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson announced the Quality Initiative, his commitment to assure quality health care for all Americans through published consumer information coupled with health care quality improvement support through Medicare's Quality Improvement Organizations.

The CMS Hospital Quality Initiative, launched in 2003, uses a variety of tools to stimulate and support a significant improvement in the quality of hospital care. The initiative aims to refine and standardize hospital data, data transmission, and performance measures in order to construct a single robust, prioritized and standard quality measure set for hospitals. Our ultimate goal is that all private and public purchasers, oversight and accrediting entities, payers and providers of hospital care would use the same measures in their public reporting activities. Among the tools we will use to achieve this objective are collaborations with providers, purchasers and consumers, technical support from Quality Improvement Organizations, research and development of standardized measures, and commitment to assuring compliance with our conditions of participation.

Overview

CMS is currently working with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), also of HHS, to develop a standardized hospital patients' perspective on care instrument and data collection protocol that can be used by hospitals to collect comparable data to be used in publicly reporting hospital patient perspectives on the care they received. From the beginning of the process to develop a hospital patients perspectives on care survey, members of the hospital community have been supportive and have provided valuable input. They have repeatedly reinforced their commitment to implementing the survey once it is finalized. The National Voluntary Hospital Reporting Initiative, launched by American Hospital Association, the Federation of American Hospitals, and the Association of American Medical Colleges, and supported by AHRQ and CMS and other organizations such as the National Quality Forum, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, American Medical Association, Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project, AFL-CIO and AARP, plans to incorporate the survey into their initiative later this year.

AHRQ is the nation's lead Federal agency in establishing surveys for measuring and reporting patients' experiences with the health care system. AHRQ's CAHPS (formerly the Consumer Assessment of Health Plans) initiative, begun in October 1995, has become the industry standard for obtaining consumers' assessment of their health plans. CAHPS has since been expanded to other health care settings and specific populations. The Hospital CAHPS (HCAHPS) initiative focuses on measuring and reporting patients' experiences with their inpatient care. Its intent is twofold: to help consumers make more informed choices among hospitals and to create incentives for hospitals to improve their performance. The HCAHPS survey is being developed by AHRQ's CAHPS II grantees from RAND, Harvard Medical School, and the American Institutes for Research.

HCAHPS[®] Development

Begun in July 2002, HCAHPS was created in response to the need to assess the experiences of hospital patients, as cited by both the Institute of Medicine and the National Quality Forum. As part of the development process, stakeholder meetings were held to identify the issues, concerns, and interests of the health care community. Key organizations representing both patients and providers participated in these meetings. They included the American Hospital Association (AHA), the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), the Federation of American Hospitals (FAH), the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), AARP, Ford Motor Company, the National Partnership for Women and Families, the American Medical Association, and the American Nurses Association, among others.

The process for HCAHPS development reflects a rigorous process of scientific research, consumer and field testing, and multiple opportunities for public comments. The goal is to develop the best tool to measure patient perspectives on care for public reporting. To develop the core HCAHPS instrument multiple strategies were used: a call for measures; review of existing literature; cognitive interviews; testing of the draft instrument in a CMS Three-State Pilot in Arizona, Maryland, and New York; psychometric analysis; consumer focus groups; public input in response to Federal Register notices; and stakeholder input. The current version of the instrument includes 24 core HCAHPS questions covering the topics: care from nurses, care from doctors, hospital environment, patient experiences in hospital, hospital discharge, and overall rating of the hospital. It also includes eight additional items for adjusting for the mix of patients across hospitals and for analysis purposes. The current instrument reflects many different inputs and feedback and may be further refined as a result of public input from the most recent Federal Register notice (December 5, 2003) soliciting comments on the instrument and its implementation strategy.

The CMS Three-State Pilot served as a laboratory for assessing the draft HCAHPS instrument. Results were used to examine the reliability and validity of the draft measures and to identify the items that are most useful for public reporting. The pilot test Analysis Report may be found on the www.cms.hhs.gov/quality/hospital web site.

Following CMS and AHRQ revisions of the current instrument and implementation strategy based on public input and information from additional testing, there will be another opportunity for public comment through the Federal Register process. At the end of this process, HHS will have a standardized instrument and well-defined methodology for measuring patient perspectives on hospital care. All materials will be put in the public domain for use by hospitals or other interested parties.

National Implementation

HCAHPS will be implemented later this year under the National Voluntary Hospital Reporting Initiative, launched by AHA, AAMC, and FAH, and supported by AHRQ and CMS and other organizations such as the National Quality Forum and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. The initial effort asks hospitals to report the results of their performance on ten quality measures for three medical conditions – acute myocardial infarction, heart failure, and pneumonia. Subsequent phases of the National Voluntary Hospital Reporting Initiative will add measures on selected new conditions and will include HCAHPS survey measures pertaining to aspects of care in hospitals and patients' perspectives of their hospital care. When the survey instrument is completed it will be included in the growing family of CAHPS tools and products. The final version of HCAHPS is expected to be available in English, Spanish and other languages.

For More Information

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

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

To Provide Comments or Ask Questions:

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

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