

HCAHPS Fact Sheet

(CAHPS[®] Hospital Survey)

March 2009

Overview

The HCAHPS (*Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems*) survey is the first national, standardized, publicly reported survey of patients' perspectives of hospital care. HCAHPS (pronounced “*H-caps*”), also known as the CAHPS[®] Hospital Survey, is a standardized survey instrument and data collection methodology for measuring patients' perceptions of their hospital experience. While many hospitals have collected information on patient satisfaction for their own internal use, until HCAHPS there was no national standard for collecting and publicly reporting information about patient experience of care that allowed valid comparisons to be made across hospitals locally, regionally and nationally.

Three broad goals have shaped HCAHPS. First, the survey is designed to produce data about patients' perspectives of care that allow objective and meaningful comparisons of hospitals on topics that are important to consumers. Second, public reporting of the survey results creates new incentives for hospitals to improve quality of care. Third, public reporting serves to enhance accountability in health care by increasing transparency of the quality of hospital care provided in return for the public investment. With these goals in mind, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the HCAHPS Project Team have taken substantial steps to assure that the survey is credible, useful, and practical.

HCAHPS Development, Testing and Endorsement

Beginning in 2002, CMS partnered with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), another agency in the federal Department of Health and Human Services, to develop and test the HCAHPS survey. AHRQ carried out a rigorous scientific process, including a public call for measures; review of literature; cognitive interviews; consumer focus groups; stakeholder input; a three-state pilot test; extensive psychometric analyses; consumer testing; and numerous small-scale field tests. During this process, CMS provided three separate opportunities for the public to comment on HCAHPS, and responded to well over one thousand comments.

In May 2005, the HCAHPS survey was endorsed by the National Quality Forum, a national organization that represents the consensus of many healthcare providers, consumer groups, professional associations, purchasers, federal agencies, and research and quality organizations. In December 2005, the federal Office of Management and Budget gave its final approval for the national implementation of HCAHPS for public reporting purposes. CMS implemented the HCAHPS survey in October 2006, and the first public reporting of HCAHPS results occurred in March 2008. The survey, its methodology and the results it produces are in the public domain.

The enactment of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 created an additional incentive for acute care hospitals to participate in HCAHPS. Since July 2007, hospitals subject to the Inpatient Prospective Payment System (IPPS) annual payment update provisions ("subsection (d) hospitals") must collect and submit HCAHPS data in order to receive their full IPPS annual payment update. IPPS hospitals that fail to report the required quality measures, which include the HCAHPS survey, may receive an

annual payment update that is reduced by 2.0 percentage points. Non-IPPS hospitals, such as Critical Access Hospitals, may voluntarily participate in HCAHPS.

Hospitals implement HCAHPS under the auspices of the Hospital Quality Alliance (HQA), a private/public partnership that includes major hospital and medical associations, consumer groups, measurement and accrediting bodies, government, and other groups that share an interest in improving hospital quality. The HQA has endorsed HCAHPS.

HCAHPS Content and Administration

The HCAHPS survey asks discharged patients 27 questions about their recent hospital stay. The survey contains 18 questions about critical aspects of patients' hospital experiences (communication with nurses and doctors, the responsiveness of hospital staff, the cleanliness and quietness of the hospital environment, pain management, communication about medicines, discharge information, overall rating of hospital, and would they recommend the hospital). The survey also includes four items to direct patients to relevant questions, three to adjust for the mix of patients across hospitals, and two items that support Congressionally-mandated reports.

The HCAHPS survey is administered to a random sample of adult patients across medical conditions between 48 hours and six weeks following discharge; the survey is not restricted to Medicare beneficiaries. Participating hospitals may either use an approved survey vendor, or collect their own HCAHPS data (if approved by CMS to do so). To accommodate the needs of hospitals, HCAHPS can be implemented in four different survey modes: mail, telephone, mail with telephone follow-up, or active interactive voice recognition (IVR). Hospitals may either integrate HCAHPS with their own patient survey, or use HCAHPS by itself. Hospitals must survey patients throughout each month of the year. The survey is available in official English, Spanish, Chinese, Russian and Vietnamese versions. The survey itself, as well as detailed information on sampling, data collection and coding, and file submission, are contained in the HCAHPS *Quality Assurance Guidelines, Version 4.0*, found at the official HCAHPS website, www.hcahpsonline.org.

HCAHPS Publicly Reported Measures

For each participating hospital, HCAHPS results on 10 measures (six summary measures, two individual items and two global ratings) are publicly reported on the *Hospital Compare* website, found at www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov. The six summary measures, or composites, summarize how well nurses and doctors communicate with patients, how responsive hospital staff are to patients' needs, how well hospital staff help patients manage pain, how well the staff communicates with patients about medicines, and whether key information was provided at discharge. The two individual items address the cleanliness and quietness of patients' rooms, while the two global ratings report patients' overall rating of the hospital, and whether they would recommend the hospital to family and friends. The survey response rate and the number of completed surveys, in broad ranges, are also publicly reported.

Each of the six summary measures is constructed from two or three survey questions. Combining related questions into summary measures for public reporting allows consumers to quickly review patient experience of care data, and increases the statistical reliability of these measures.

HCAHPS and Public Reporting

CMS publishes HCAHPS results on the *Hospital Compare* website four times a year. A downloadable version of HCAHPS results, representing the four most recent quarters of patient data, is also available on www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov. The number of hospitals that publicly report HCAHPS results has increased from 2,521 in March 2008, to 3,711 in March 2009. A brief summary of state and national results can be found on the official HCAHPS website, *HCAHPS On-Line*, at www.hcahpsonline.org.

To ensure that publicly reported HCAHPS scores permit fair and accurate comparisons across hospitals, it is necessary to adjust for factors that are not directly related to hospital performance but which affect how patients answer HCAHPS survey items. CMS and the HCAHPS Project Team perform adjustments that eliminate any advantage or disadvantage in scores that might result from the survey mode employed or from characteristics of patients that are beyond a hospital's control. In addition, the HCAHPS Project Team undertakes a series of quality oversight activities, including inspection of survey administration procedures, analysis of submitted data, and site visits of HCAHPS survey vendors and self-administering hospitals, to assure that HCAHPS data are collected properly and in a standardized manner.

For More Information

To learn more about HCAHPS, including background information, policy updates, administration procedures, training opportunities, and how to participate in the survey, please visit *HCAHPS On-Line*, at www.hcahpsonline.org.

To Provide Comments or Ask Questions:

- To communicate with CMS staff about HCAHPS: Hospitalcahps@cms.hhs.gov
- For technical assistance, contact the HCAHPS Project Team: hcahps@azqio.sdps.org or 1-888-884-4007