



HCAHPS Essentials

March 2009

HCAHPS Alert

In the February issue of Random Samples, HealthStream Research alerted you to the [new CMS guidelines for HCAHPS communication](#). Hospitals (and survey vendors) are **not** allowed to do any of the following:

- Ask any HCAHPS questions of patients prior to administration of the survey after discharge
- Attempt to influence or encourage patients to answer HCAHPS questions in a particular way
- Imply that the hospital (or any of its employees or agents) will be rewarded for positive feedback from patients by asking patients to choose certain types of responses
- Indicate that the hospital is hoping for a given response, such as a 10, *Definitely Yes*, or *Always*
- Ask patients to explain why they did not rate a hospital with the most favorable rating
- Offer incentives of any kind for participation in the survey

Soon after CMS released the above list, they provided additional guidelines:

- Inpatients must not be given *any* survey during their hospital stay or at the time of discharge.
- The HCAHPS survey must be administered prior to any other inpatient survey.
- The HCAHPS survey sample must be drawn prior to the administration of any other hospital inpatient survey. *Reminder: All discharged hospital inpatients who are eligible for the HCAHPS survey must be included in the HCAHPS sample frame.*
- Patients who were not randomly selected into the HCAHPS sample become eligible to receive a separate inpatient survey at any time after the HCAHPS sample has been drawn.

HealthStream Research is communicating almost daily with CMS, on behalf of clients and non-clients alike, in an effort to determine not only what *isn't* allowed, but what *is* allowed. If you are concerned that your service recovery policies, discharge processes, survey promotion strategies, or any other type of patient evaluation/interaction are not in compliance with the new CMS guidelines, please send an email to researchinfo@healthstream.com describing your situation and our HCAHPS experts will contact CMS on your (anonymous) behalf.

Important Updates

- CMS has posted the HCAHPS Quality Assurance Guidelines Summary of Key Changes and Clarifications in V4.0 document. This document is posted on the [Quality Assurance page](#).
- All Q3 data has been submitted to [QualityNet](#). Hospitals are encouraged to sign into their QNet account and review their data.
- The update to [HospitalCompare](#) (for Q3/07 – Q2/08 data) is scheduled for March 26, 2009. Hospitals will then receive and be able to view their preview reports of the information that is to be posted. IPPS hospitals may NOT suppress this information; however, if they choose, CAH (critical access hospitals) may continue to suppress.
- Reminder: Calls to patients must be initiated no later than 42 days post discharge. In order to meet that, HealthStream must receive timely sample loads to keep hospitals in compliance.

Upcoming Data Submission Deadlines

2009 deadlines for HCAHPS data submission are as follows:

- **April 8, 2009** is the data submission deadline for patients discharged in October, November and December 2008. December 2008 Dry Run data also must be submitted by this date. HealthStream Research is currently in the process of conducting data submission for this period on behalf of our HCAHPS clients.
- **July 8, 2009** is the data submission deadline for patients discharged in January, February and March 2009. March 2009 Dry Run data also must be submitted by this date.
- **October 14, 2009** is the data submission deadline for patients discharged in April, May and June 2009. June 2009 Dry Run data also must be submitted by this date.

For HCAHPS questions or assistance at HealthStream Research:

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Quality Net Exchange at qnetsupport@ifmc.sdps.org

1-866-288-8912

Official HCAHPS Website for content, announcements, updates, & reminders:

<http://www.hcahponline.org/>