



National Hospital Care Survey

Ambulatory Pretest *Frequently Asked Questions*

What is the National Hospital Care Survey?

The National Hospital Care Survey (NHCS) will provide nationally representative health care statistics on inpatient care, as well as care delivered in hospital emergency departments, outpatient departments, ambulatory surgery locations, and freestanding ambulatory surgery centers. Data collected in the survey will allow linkage of encounters across hospital units, both inpatient and ambulatory, and with other data sources such as the National Death Index and Medicare data. Information about the National Hospital Care Survey can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhcs.htm>.

What is the National Hospital Care Survey ambulatory pretest?

The National Hospital Care Survey (NHCS) ambulatory pretest is a test of the feasibility of integrating ambulatory data collection for hospitals and freestanding ambulatory surgery centers into the NHCS. It will include new visit sampling and data collection methods which will reduce the burden on facility staff and introduce new data elements concerning drug-related emergency department visits.

Who is sponsoring the National Hospital Care Survey pretest?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is sponsoring the National Hospital Care Survey. The Center is the Nation's principal health statistics agency and is responsible for assessing the health status and health care needs of people in the United States.

Who is conducting the National Hospital Care Survey pretest?

Westat, an employee-owned corporation based in Maryland that conducts statistical survey research, is under contract to the National Center for Health Statistics to conduct the National Hospital Care Survey. More information about Westat can be found at www.westat.com.

What will be expected of us if our facility agrees to participate in the National Hospital Care Survey pretest?

If your facility agrees to participate in the pretest, to be conducted in the late summer of 2012, NHCS Project staff will work with a main point of contact to coordinate all data collection activities. These activities include completion of survey induction interviews on facility characteristics and abstraction of patient visit information from medical records by NHCS project staff. On average, data collection will take 2 weeks at each facility. The purpose of the pretest is to test several data collection methods for the ambulatory component of the survey.

How did you select our facility to participate in the National Hospital Care Survey pretest?

The NHCS pretest will be conducted in 32 hospitals and 15 freestanding ambulatory surgery centers. Hospitals already participating in the inpatient component of the National Hospital Care Survey were selected based on the following criteria: having an emergency department and/or outpatient department and/or ambulatory surgery locations and being nationally representative with respect to size, service type, and geographic location. Freestanding ambulatory surgery centers already participating in the National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey and that perform colonoscopies were chosen for the pretest because the pretest includes a special study on colonoscopies.





How can my facility and staff benefit from participating in the National Hospital Care Survey pretest?

By participating in the pretest, your facility will help shape the full survey, which will launch in 2013. Each hospital and freestanding ambulatory surgery center will be paid \$500 for their participation in the pretest. In addition, hospital staff who specialize in health information management may be eligible to receive continuing education credits for completing a short online training course to learn about participation in the National Hospital Care Survey. Information on the training can be found at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhcs/continuing_education.htm.

What are the patient privacy and confidentiality issues?

The National Center for Health Statistics is required by law to keep all data regarding patients and health care facilities strictly confidential and to use these data only for research and statistical purposes, as stated by Section 308(d) of the Public Health Service Act [42 USC 242m(d)] and Section 513 of the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA, PL 107-347). All protected health information will be kept confidential and will be used only when required and with necessary controls by National Center for Health Statistics staff, contractors, and agents. CIPSEA also includes provisions for a felony conviction and/or fine of up to \$250,000 if any Center or contractor staff violates the confidentiality provisions.

The National Hospital Care Survey has been approved by the National Center for Health Statistics Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research study, call the Research Ethics Review Board at the Center, toll free, at 1-800-223-8118. Please leave a brief message with your name and phone number, and refer to Protocol 2009-21.

Are there HIPAA implications for our facility as a result of participating in the National Hospital Care Survey pretest?

Special provisions within HIPAA permit health care facilities to provide data to public health entities such as the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics for research purposes such as the National Hospital Care Survey pretest.

The Privacy Rule permits (i) protected health information disclosures without written patient authorization for specified public health purposes, to public health authorities legally authorized to collect and receive the information for such purposes and (ii) disclosures that are required by state and local public health or other laws [HIPAA regulations (45 CFR 164.501)]. Thus, HIPAA permits facilities such as yours to participate in studies of this nature for public health purposes. Because contractors serve as authorized agents of the National Center for Health Statistics, it is permissible to disclose data to their contractors for the purposes of this project. HIPAA also permits covered entities to obtain the documentation and rely on the approval of one IRB or privacy board. In this case, the facility may rely on the approval of the NCHS IRB.

What will happen with the information we give you?

All information collected will be the property of the National Center for Health Statistics and will be kept strictly confidential. The identity of specific facilities or individual patients will not be released in any manner except to National Center for Health Statistics staff, contractors, and agents—only when required and with necessary controls. Results of the study will be published only in an aggregated manner that will not allow identification of any individual hospital or patient. The information gathered will be used to modify procedures and questions for the full survey which will be launched in 2013.

If you have a question that is not answered here, please call the NHCS Project staff at 1-888-377-7161.