



Background

The National Hospital Care Survey (NHCS) is a new survey that integrates the National Hospital Discharge Survey and the National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey. One benefit of this survey integration is that data can be collected on specific topics of public health interest, such as drug-related visits to emergency departments as previously gathered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services' Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN). In 2011-2012, hospitals were asked to provide data on all inpatients from their Uniform Bill (UB)-04 administrative claims database, as well as facility-level data through a facility questionnaire. Beginning in the late summer of 2012, hospitals will be asked to participate in a pretest for the ambulatory component of the NHCS.

Sponsorship

This project is sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics whose mission it is to provide statistical information that will guide actions and policies to improve the health of the American people. As the Nation's principal health statistics agency, the National Center for Health Statistics leads the way with accurate, relevant, and timely data. On their behalf, Westat, a private research firm located in Rockville, MD, is conducting the NHCS ambulatory pretest.

Purpose

The 2012 pretest will test data collection procedures in 32 hospitals to identify the best method for obtaining ambulatory health care data. The results from the pretest will shape the full survey scheduled to begin in 2013.

Participation

Hospitals already participating in the inpatient component of the survey that have emergency departments and/or outpatient departments and/or ambulatory surgery locations are eligible for the pretest and **will receive \$500 upon its completion**.

Once a hospital decides to participate, NHCS project staff will contact the hospital to arrange the following:

- An induction interview to determine if the hospital and its departments (e.g., emergency department, outpatient department, and ambulatory surgery) are eligible for the survey and to obtain information on topics of public health importance (e.g., emergency department crowding and electronic health record adoption). This will at most take 1 ½ hours, including answering any questions.
- An induction interview with each ambulatory unit (e.g., emergency service area, outpatient department clinic, and ambulatory surgery location) selected for the survey to obtain information needed for sampling visits. This will take approximately 15 minutes per unit.
- Pulling and refiling medical records which is estimated to take 1 minute each. For each ambulatory unit, approximately 100 medical records will need to be pulled and refiled. This pertains only to hospitals with paper medical records.

After the induction is completed, NHCS project staff will abstract data from a subset of patient charts in each ambulatory setting for a predetermined period of time (i.e., visits that occurred during a 1-, 2-, or 3-month period). The data collected will include patient demographics, diagnosis, services, medications, and disposition.

Health information management staff are eligible to receive continuing education credits for taking time to learn about the survey at: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhcs/continuing_education.htm.

Participation in this pretest is voluntary, and there is no penalty for not participating.



Confidentiality and Data Safeguarding

All information that would permit identification of an individual or hospital participating in this survey is kept strictly confidential. Survey participants receive assurance of this confidentiality under the Public Health Service Act. All project staff members have signed confidentiality agreements and are prohibited by law from using the information they receive for anything other than this project. Any other use is a violation of Federal law and is subject to heavy fines and imprisonment. Compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and its Privacy Rule allows hospitals to disclose protected health information without patient authorization for public health purposes.

This National Hospital Care Survey has been approved by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget and the National Center for Health Statistics' Institutional Review Board (IRB). For questions about a hospital's rights as a participant in this research study, please call the Research Ethics Review Board at the National Center for Health Statistics, toll free, at 1-800-223-8118. Leave a brief message with a contact name and telephone number, and refer to Protocol 2009-21.

For More Information

For more information about the NHCS pretest, contact:

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Or visit the National Hospital Care Survey website: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhcs.htm>