



TOOL/UTILITY

Patient Experience: Messaging for Health Plans

April 2012

Health plans have a large stake in their members' experience of care at the doctor's office. Research has shown that good patient experience is associated with patients being more engaged in their care and willing to follow their providers' instructions; moreover, patient experience has been associated with improved patient outcomes. [See [Good for Health, Good for Business: The Case for Measuring Patient Experience of Care](#) for specific citations.]

[Name of Market/Alliance] invites health plans to collaborate on a community-wide effort to measure and publicly report patient experience of care in the clinical setting.

We would like health plans to sponsor the effort by providing the survey sample frame (i.e., the list of patients from which a random sample is selected for surveying) based on claims data and to contribute financially to surveying costs.

Our community has the opportunity to pool resources among health plans to collect ambulatory patient experience data more efficiently and economically.

A single, standardized approach for collecting ambulatory patient experience data minimizes the burden and redundancy that can occur when patients are asked to respond to surveys from multiple sponsors and reduces confusion due to conflicting results that can arise among multiple surveys.

A collaborative effort among health plans sends a strong message to both providers and the public about the importance of patient experience and efforts to improve it.

By measuring and reporting patient experience data, health plans will be responsive to the things members care most about: communication with, access to, and respectful treatment from their providers.

Ambulatory patient experience survey results may be used to evaluate the performance of physician offices within a health plan network, determine pay-for-performance awards, and help facilitate members' choice of provider.

About Aligning Forces for Quality

Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q) is the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's signature effort to lift the overall quality of health care in targeted communities, as well as reduce racial and ethnic disparities and provide real models for national reform. The Foundation's commitment to improve health care in 16 AF4Q communities is the largest effort of its kind ever undertaken by a U.S. philanthropy. AF4Q asks the people who get care, give care and pay for care to work together to improve the quality and value of care delivered locally. The Center for Health Care Quality in the Department of Health Policy at George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services serves as the national program office. Learn more about AF4Q at www.forces4quality.org. Learn more about RWJF's efforts to improve quality and equality of care at www.rwjf.org/qualityequality/af4q/.

About the Author

The Shaller Consulting Group provides technical assistance to *Aligning Forces for Quality* by helping regional Alliances support patient experience measurement and improvement.

[Name of Market/Alliance] will measure patient experience using the [CAHPS Clinician & Group Survey](#) (CG-CAHPS), a free, standardized survey available through the CAHPS program, which is funded and administered by the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. CAHPS surveys are the most widely used surveys for assessing patient experience of care in the United States and are endorsed by the [National Quality Forum](#).

There are several examples of health plans pooling resources together to measure and report on patient experience in the communities they serve. For nearly a decade, health plans in California have joined together to support the collection and reporting of ambulatory patient experience data. More recently, national plans such as Aetna, CIGNA Healthcare and UnitedHealthcare, as well as regional Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans, have collaborated to sponsor surveys in Denver, Kansas City, Memphis, and Manhattan.

**Aligning Forces
for Quality** | Improving Health & Health Care
in Communities Across America



The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, measurable and timely change. For 40 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.