

MHQP PATIENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY: MOVING THE BAR IN THE PHYSICIAN/PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

Massachusetts Health Quality Partners (MHQP) has just released the results of the only independent patient experience survey of nearly 65,000 patients and their families from more than 500 practices representing more than 4,000 physicians in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This new data provides some interesting benchmarks about how patients and providers are working together collaboratively to improve overall patient care and meet the specific needs of patients on many fronts.

The purpose of the Patient Experience Survey is to ask patients to rate the quality of certain doctor-patient interactions and other aspects of care including: whether they feel their doctor knows them; how well they communicate with their doctor and office staff; whether they have access to timely appointments and information; whether follow-up care with other doctors is well-coordinated; and whether they would recommend their doctor to a friend or family member. The survey also asks about organizational aspects of care including: access, self-management support, and interactions with office staff. MHQP's annual survey continually expands to measure aspects of care that are important to patients and their providers. MHQP conducted its first Patient Experience Survey in 2005.

The 2016 data reveals that while Massachusetts patients give their physicians very high ratings for communication, many also report that they and their physicians have not talked about their overall health goals or what might make it hard to meet those goals. This finding highlights a major opportunity for improving the way physicians engage with their patients about what happens between office visits.

Unlike satisfaction surveys that ask about general perceptions, MHQP's patient experience survey asks people what actually happened when they or their children needed primary care

On the cumulative measure of how well physicians communicate with their patients, the statewide mean score for all adult practices was 93.6 out of a potential 100 points and 96.7 for pediatric practices,.

However, for the measure of whether primary care providers talked with patients about their goals for health or if there were things that made it hard for them to take care of their health, the statewide mean score for all adult practices was 55.3 out of a potential 100 points and 46 for pediatric practices. (Pediatric scores are based on responses by patients' parents or other adult caretakers.)

In Behavioral health which was added to the survey in 2014, , with questions about whether or not primary care providers asked their patients about feeling depressed, feeling stressed, or experiencing problems with alcohol, drugs, or a mental or emotional illness, the 2016 survey's statewide mean score for the cumulative behavioral health measure was 59.6 of a possible 100 points, up by 12.2 percent from a mean score of 53.1 two years earlier.

"We asked patients whether their doctor listened carefully, explained clearly, showed respect, and spent enough time with them during office visits, and the response was overwhelmingly positive," MHQP's President and CEO Barbra Rabson explained. "But what was missing for many patients, was a conversation and guidance that would help them gain better personal control over their health and wellness."

Massachusetts Health Quality Partners (MHQP) is a nationally recognized, non-profit coalition of physicians, hospitals, health plans, purchasers, patient and public representatives, academics, and government agencies. MHQP has a well-established track record as the trusted leader in Massachusetts for objective, independent health care quality measurement and reporting. MHQP brings together multiple stakeholders, often with disparate agendas, to effectively work together to produce trusted, comparable performance measures that help drive healthcare quality improvement in Massachusetts. The Patient Experience Survey was first conducted in 2005.