
HealthCare TRENDS

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Patient Engagement: Are the Stars Aligned for Your Hospital?

By Marc Grossman | Principal
Sandy Phillips | Senior Manager

Now that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is posting quarterly hospital “star” ratings on the Hospital Compare website (www.medicare.gov/hospitalcompare), hospitals are faced with a potentially damaging public relations nightmare.

Anyone, including board members, can type in a zip code or hospital name and see how your institution fared compared with the competition.

The ratings are derived from the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) Survey¹, which targets recently discharged patients; because of this you may reasonably be asking what can be done during inpatient interactions to help increase your ratings. Making improvements is an urgent issue, given the influence of these ratings on both patient choice and value-based reimbursement. The potential negative impact of a poor rating will not disappear if improvements are neglected, especially because the results will be updated quarterly.

While patient engagement is critical to improving scores, technology promises to be part of the solution. Advances such as mobile computing, integrated communications, and secure, HIPAA-compliant operations (secure text messaging and voice



annotation, for example) enable engagement while patients are still in the hospital, resulting in more satisfied responses when asked post-discharge about their stay.



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One way to positively affect patients' post-discharge responses is to ensure appropriate operational actions are being implemented during the inpatient experience. Technical solutions aimed at improving a hospital's score can be achieved by examining policies and procedures in the targeted areas and reviewing staff practices associated with those policies. The IT staff can build in metrics and analytics as an integral part of the design to ensure implemented solutions are creating the desired outcomes.

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A specific survey area, whether or not staff consistently explains medications to patients before administering them, offers specific opportunities for improvement. For example, the hospital can implement a real-time survey instrument based upon interaction with existing electronic medication administration record (eMAR) systems if the hospital provides electronic connectivity through the patient television or allows patients to have mobile devices in their room. Once the eMAR system is aware a patient received a medication, a text or e-mail can then be sent asking if the patient understood what medication they received and why they were receiving it. If the patient answers no at this point, a nurse can be notified in real-time to reengage and supplement the patient's understanding.

Technology can also play a pivotal role in offering real-time feedback for pain management procedures and patient comfort. Standard pain management orders can be made available for physicians to remotely authorize

medications once notified by text or cell phone. This new procedure reduces the amount of time patients have to wait before getting pain relief.

	Your Hospital	Competitor A	Competitor B
Patient survey summary star rating. More stars are better.	★ ★ ● ●	★ ★ ★ ● ●	★ ★ ★ ★ ●

Similarly, factors affecting inpatient satisfaction, such as noise level and response time can be facilitated through improved utilization of mobile communications, nurse call systems, and actively monitoring noise levels.

Naturally, technology can only act as a tool and an enabler of thorough process design and enactment. The WeiserMazars Healthcare Practice has the industry knowledge and experience to help ensure the stars are aligned for your hospital. If you'd like to speak to one of our trusted advisors about how we can improve your hospital's STAR ratings please click [here](#).

For more information contact:



Marc Grossman | Principal
212.375.6526
Marc.Grossman@WeiserMazars.com



Sandy Phillips | Senior Manager
770.367.0059
Sandy.Phillips@WeiserMazars.com

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¹ a national, standardized, publicly reported survey of patients' perspectives of hospital care developed by CMS partnered with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)

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