

Background Information on ICH CAHPS Survey Revisions

Most patients with end-stage renal disease (ESRD) must receive dialysis or a kidney transplant to stay alive, and for those who rely on dialysis, most patients currently receive in-center hemodialysis. Because the majority of facilities that offer in-center hemodialysis in the United States are small, a census of patients for most facilities is included in the ICH CAHPS Survey sample twice each year. In recent years, ESRD experts and stakeholders have expressed concerns that ICH patients may experience survey burden because of the length of the survey and the fact that many are asked to participate in the survey twice each year. In addition, survey response rates continue to slowly decline, and it is believed that the length of the survey could be a contributing factor.

To address these concerns, CMS and RTI International conducted a number of activities related to reducing the length of the current ICH CAHPS Survey. Based on psychometric analyses, discussions with a Technical Expert Panel of ESRD stakeholders, survey experts, and large dialysis organizations, focus groups with dialysis patients, and discussions with the CAHPS Consortium, survey revisions to the ICH CAHPS Survey included four components of item removal specification:

1. Removal of all questions that make up the Nephrologist Communication and Caring (NCC) multi-item measure and the nephrologist rating question;
2. Removal of questions which are unnecessary for the psychometric functioning of the Quality of Dialysis Center Care and Operations (QDCCO) multi-item measure;
3. Removal of core ICH CAHPS questions that are not included in any multi-item measures (stand-alone questions); and
4. Removal of questions in the *About You* and proxy sections.

We are currently proposing to remove 23 questions from the mail ICH CAHPS Survey (22 in telephone script): 7 questions belonging to the NCC multi-item measure and nephrologist rating, 4 questions from the QDCCO multi-item measure, 2 stand-alone questions (not part of a multi-item measure), 9 questions from the *About You* section, and 1 question from the mail survey proxy series. **Table 1** shows the final survey questions that we are proposing to remove from the revised ICH CAHPS Survey.

We are proposing to remove all questions that make up the NCC multi-item measure, as well as the nephrologist rating question, based on feedback from stakeholders that patients may not always be able to differentiate a kidney doctor from other dialysis center staff when answering the questions, and that facilities do not have the ability to hold kidney doctors accountable for low NCC measure scores.

Table 1. Proposed survey questions to remove from the revised ICH CAHPS Survey

Question # in current ICH CAHPS Survey	Section/Composite	Question Text
Q3	NCC	In the last 3 months, how often did your kidney doctors listen carefully to you?
Q4	NCC	In the last 3 months, how often did your kidney doctors explain things in a way that was easy for you to understand?
Q5	NCC	In the last 3 months, how often did your kidney doctors show respect for what you had to say?
Q6	NCC	In the last 3 months, how often did your kidney doctors spend enough time with you?
Q7	NCC	In the last 3 months, how often did you feel your kidney doctors really cared about you as a person?
Q8	NCC	Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst kidney doctors possible and 10 is the best kidney doctors possible, what number would you use to rate the kidney doctors you have now?
Q9	NCC	Do your kidney doctors seem informed and up-to-date about the health care you receive from other doctors?
Q14	QDCCO	In the last 3 months, how often did you feel the dialysis center staff really cared about you as a person?
Q16	QDCCO	In the last 3 months, did dialysis center staff keep information about you and your health as private as possible from other patients?
Q18	Stand-alone	In the last 3 months, has anyone on the dialysis center staff asked you about how your kidney disease affects other parts of your life?
Q21	QDCCO	In the last 3 months, how often did dialysis center staff insert your needles with as little pain as possible?
Q26	QDCCO	In the last 3 months, did dialysis center staff talk to you about what you should eat and drink?
Q44	Stand-alone	Medicare and your State have special agencies that check the quality of care at this dialysis center. In the last 12 months, did you make a complaint to any of these agencies?
Q47	About You	Are you being treated for high blood pressure?

Q48	About You	Are you being treated for diabetes or high blood sugar?
Q49	About You	Are you being treated for heart disease or heart problems?
Q50	About You	Are you deaf or do you have serious difficulty hearing?
Q51	About You	Are you blind or do you have serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses?
Q52	About You	Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?
Q53	About You	Do you have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?
Q54	About You	Do you have difficulty dressing or bathing?
Q55	About You	Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping?
Q61	Proxy section, mail only	Who helped you complete this survey?

In addition to these proposed survey revisions, CMS and RTI International are currently planning to test additional survey changes in the near future, including:

- the addition of health equity questions;
- the addition of home dialysis questions; and
- changes to some existing survey questions.