

THE GP PATIENT SURVEY



Information for GPs and Practice Staff

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The Department of Health (DH) is running a GP Patient Survey again this year to assess patients' experiences of their local NHS services. Survey specialist Ipsos MORI continues to run the survey on behalf of DH and this year has worked with primary care academics to develop a new questionnaire. Around 5.7 million patients in England are invited to give their experiences.

Why is this happening?

The GP Patient Survey continues to be developed as part of the Government's commitment to make the NHS more responsive to patients' needs. The Survey underpins a range of policies to improve the patient experience. This includes supporting assessment of practice achievement of the patient experience indicators in the Quality and Outcomes Framework covering 48-hour access and advance booking. Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) will also be assessed on their record on patient experience of GP services using the survey data, which will help to improve standards. The findings of the GP Patient Survey will also provide valuable information for patients about what other patients think about local services.

What does the survey cover?

The new survey questionnaire covers a range of issues that are important to patients including questions on:

- The surgery environment and helpfulness of reception staff
- Getting through on the Phone
- Accessing GP appointments
- Patient satisfaction with practice opening hours
- Consultations with healthcare professionals
- Patient satisfaction with overall care and planning care
- Accessing local out of hours care

How have patients been selected?

A random sample of patients registered at your practice has again been drawn from the NHAIS (Exeter) Registration systems by the Department of Health. The sample is being used by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Department, under the terms of a Data Processor Agreement the Department has put in place with Ipsos MORI. The sample is being used for survey administration purposes only. Once Ipsos MORI has completed its analysis of the responses, all sample data will be securely destroyed.

The following personal data are being collected:

- Patients' NHS number: provides a unique identifier
- Name: for personalised letters
- Address: to conduct a postal survey
- Date of birth: to exclude patients under 18 years of age
- Gender: for data analysis and non response bias analysis, e.g. to ascertain if certain groups are less likely to respond to the survey

No other personal data will be collected from the NHAIS system. Ipsos MORI has not been given access to any NHS systems, nor has it been provided with any clinical information about patients' health or consultations.

What happens next?

- Patients selected to take part in the survey will be sent a questionnaire in the week commencing 5 January 2009
- Reminder questionnaires will be sent out in February and March to people who do not return a questionnaire, unless they have opted out following the initial questionnaire (see below)
- Analysis and reporting will be undertaken in April and May 2009
- PCTs will receive results data in May so that they can calculate achievement of QOF indicators PE7 (patient experience of 48-hour access) and PE8 (patient experience of advance booking) and finalise payments to practices by the end of the first quarter of the 2009/10 financial year

Taking part in the survey is voluntary. If patients do not wish to take part, they do not need to return their questionnaire and can disregard the reminders. If there are patients you know who should not receive mailings to their address or who have registered an objection with their GP to receiving mailings, practices should email the names and NHS numbers of these patients to gppatientsurvey@dh.gsi.gov.uk.

As there is a possibility that some patients could receive a questionnaire at an inappropriate time, please note that we will always continue to withdraw patients from survey mailings wherever possible. Cut-off dates for patient opt outs from the 2008/09 survey are 28th November for the main mailing, 19 January 2009 for the first reminder mailing and 23 February 2009 for the final reminder mailout. For future surveys please continue to notify the mailbox as soon as you can.

Confidentiality

We are aware that the confidentiality of patient details will be a major concern for GPs and the public. This has been taken very seriously and the administration of the survey will ensure that the survey is conducted within the law, that the requirements under the Data Protection Act 1998 are upheld, and that the Caldicott Principles are adhered to. For more information about this please see the website address below.

Accessibility

To assist patients who may find it difficult to complete the questionnaire, Ipsos MORI is putting in place various measures to help these respondents. These include:

- A website (www.gp-patient.co.uk) with a detailed Frequently Asked Questions section. These will be available in English and in the 13 other languages most commonly used by NHS Direct
- The website will be fully compatible with W3C Standards which means that users will be able to use Screen Reader software and it will be possible to change the font size of the text
- The questionnaire will also be available on the website in British Sign Language
- Alternative versions of the questionnaire, such as large print and Braille will be available on request
- It will be possible to complete the questionnaire online or over the telephone, including in the 13 languages most commonly used by NHS Direct
- There will be a telephone helpline which will be able to answer respondents' queries and help with completing the questionnaire if necessary

For more information

Please visit the following web pages for more information about the survey, including a detailed Frequently Asked Questions section:

www.pcc.nhs.uk/201.php

www.dh.gov.uk