

Wording to Encourage Completion of Open-Ended Survey Questions: Results of Two Pilot Studies

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Overview

- Two pilot studies examined completion rates of the CAHPS Narrative Item Set added to the CAHPS Clinician & Group (CG-CAHPS) Survey.
- Both studies were conducted as part of the Massachusetts Health Quality Partners (MHQP) annual statewide survey.
- The aim of the studies was to identify effective wording of transition messages for motivating respondents to complete a series of open-ended questions placed at the end of the core survey.

A **structured series** of 5 open-ended questions that:

- Prompts survey respondents to tell a **clear and comprehensive story** about their experience with a provider and his/her office staff
- **Complements** the closed-ended survey questions
- Provides **value-added information** helpful to both patients and clinicians

2015 Pilot Study

- Narrative Item Set was placed at end of CG-CAHPS short form survey administered by web (through email and letter invitations)
- Transition wording:

Would you like to provide additional comments about your experiences with this doctor?
Respondents were given a yes/no option. If they answered “yes”, they saw the following:

Your answers will never be matched with your name, but you should be aware that any comments you provide to us may be seen by your doctor, healthcare managers, or anyone else involved in your care and treatment. Your comments are an opportunity for you to provide more detailed feedback about the care, treatment, and services you receive from your doctor. This information can then be used to help your doctor and healthcare managers know what is working well and/or what may need improvement.

Do you still wish to write a comment? *Respondents were given another yes/no response option. If they answered “yes”, they saw the following:*

Disclaimer:

Your comments cannot be used to seek or obtain medical care or advice of any kind. You should not use your comments in place of a visit, phone call, or to seek advice from your doctor. **If you think you have a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department immediately.**

2015 Pilot Study Results

- A total of 2,459 sampled patients responded to the survey version with the Narrative Item Set.
- Of the total:
 - ▶ 17.2% answered at least one of the open-ended questions
 - ▶ 82.8% did not choose to leave a comment

2017 Pilot Study

- Narrative Item Set placed at end of CG-CAHPS Survey with Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) items
- Administered by web
- Respondents were randomly assigned to receive one of three invitations to complete the open-ended questions:
 1. Modified short encouragement
 2. Enhanced short encouragement
 3. No encouragement

In Your Own Words

Please answer the following questions to provide detailed feedback about the care, treatment, and services you receive from your provider. Healthcare providers value comments from their patients because these details tell them what is working well and what may need improvement.

Please do not use your comments in place of a visit or phone call, or to seek advice from your provider. Your comments may be reported publicly but will never be matched to your name.

What are the most important things that you look for in a healthcare provider and the staff in his or her office?

When you think about the things that are most important to you, how do your provider and the staff in his or her office measure up?

Now we'd like to focus on anything that has gone well in your experiences in the last 12 months with your provider and the staff in his or her office. Please explain what happened, how it happened, and how it felt to you.

Next we'd like to focus on any experiences in the last 12 months with your provider and the staff in his or her office that you wish had gone differently. Please explain what happened, how it happened, and how it felt to you.

Please describe how you and your provider relate to and interact with each other.

Submit

Screenshot of Narrative Items in MHQP's 2017 Pilot

In Your Own Words

Please answer the following questions to provide detailed feedback about the care, treatment, and services you receive from your provider. **Your provider can use this information to know what is working well or what may need improvement.**

Please do not use your comments in place of a visit or phone call, or to seek advice from your provider. Your comments may be reported publicly but will never be matched to your name.

In Your Own Words

Please answer the following questions to provide detailed feedback about the care, treatment, and services you receive from your provider. **Healthcare providers value comments from their patients because these details tell them what is working well and what may need improvement.**

Please do not use your comments in place of a visit or phone call, or to seek advice from your provider. Your comments may be reported publicly but will never be matched to your name.

No Encouragement

In Your Own Words

In your own words, please describe your experiences with this provider and his or her office staff, such as nurses and receptionists.

If you need medical advice or care, please contact your provider's office. These comments may be shared with your provider and may be reported publicly.

2017 Pilot Study Results

- A total of 706 sampled patients responded to the web version of the MHQP survey.
- Of these, 663 completed the last closed-ended question that preceded the invitation to complete the Narrative Item Set.
- Completion rates by wording version:
 1. Modified short encouragement: 73.7%
 2. Enhanced short encouragement: **77.3%**
 3. No encouragement: 60.5%

Conclusions

- Invitation wording matters
- Less is more
 - ▶ Long, dense, cautionary wording with a “gate” question led to much lower completion rates
 - ▶ Short, direct, positive wording increased completion rates more than threefold
- Wording emphasizing that providers value patient comments appears to be especially effective.