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**How to Provide Patient-Centered Care? Ask the Patient!**

*Massachusetts Physicians and Health Plans Collaborate  
To Ensure that the Patient's Voice Is Front and Center*

Boston, MA--If there is one health policy issue that unites medical professionals, consumers, employers, health plans and policymakers, it is the need to include patients and families in healthcare decision-making. The growing momentum behind patient-centered care is undeniable, both at the individual level (What care do I need, where should I get it, and what will it cost?) and at the health system level (What care and payment models will improve quality and lower cost?).

As in many other aspects of health care and health policy, Massachusetts has been at the forefront of the effort to listen to patients and engage them in their healthcare. For the past decade, Massachusetts Health Quality Partners (MHQP) has used their statewide Patient Experience Survey (PES) to ask patients about multiple aspects of their primary care. These results are publicly reported to equip patients and provider organizations with data and information they can use to drive improvements.

According to Barbra Rabson, MHQP's president and CEO, the initiative took a huge leap forward this year as, for the first time ever, provider organizations and health plans are providing financial backing for the statewide survey. "Our state's physician practices and their patients gain tremendous benefits from publicly releasing MHQP's statewide patient experience survey, and consumer demand has never been greater," Rabson said. "All of these stakeholders deserve special recognition and praise for their investments in making sure the patient voice is being heard."

Since 2005, the statewide survey and public reporting have been supported by five of the state's major health plans: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Fallon Health, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, Health New England, and Tufts Health Plan. Last year, eight provider organizations, representing nearly half of the state's primary care physicians, added their financial support: Cooley Dickinson PHO, Lowell General PHO, Mount Auburn Cambridge IPA, New England Quality Care Alliance, Partners HealthCare, Pediatric Physicians' Organization at Children's Hospital Boston, UMass Memorial Medical Group, and Steward Health Care Network.

"We can't go wrong by supporting measurement and transparency in patient experience, we can only do better." said Patricia Toro, Medical Director, New England Quality Care Alliance (NEQCA). "There are small, incremental actions that can be taken from this patient input that can result in big improvements for both patients and providers – listening more closely to our patients is a win-win all around."

Sanjay Shetty, MD, President, Steward Health Care Network, is in agreement. "Engaging patients in their health care improves health and drives better outcomes," explained Dr. Shetty. "Listening and responding to patient input received through measurement and transparency efforts results in a more actively involved and healthier patient population."

MHQP's latest PES results, which can be found at [www.healthcarecompassma.org](http://www.healthcarecompassma.org), include information on more than 500 Massachusetts primary care offices with three or more physicians. Unlike surveys that rate "patient satisfaction," the PES asks patients to report on their experiences in key aspects of care that are tied to important clinical outcomes. They include: the doctor's understanding of the patient, shared decision-making, communication with clinicians, timely access to appointments, coordination among care providers, and helpfulness of office staff.

MHQP's PES is the only statewide comparative survey on patient experience in Massachusetts, and it is the only survey of its kind in the nation that includes parents' assessments of pediatric care. MHQP shares detailed data with the participating providers to help them assess their own performance, compare it to their peers, and set goals for improvement.

At the Pediatric Physicians' Organization at Children's (PPOC) of Boston Children's Hospital, MHQP's PES results help pediatricians to meet the mission of making a difference in the lives of children and families. "PES is an important tool that enables us to bring the voices of patients and families into our clinical care. Through the statewide patient experience survey, those families are having a major impact on the ways that primary care is evolving to meet their needs in new and exciting ways," explains Dr. Greg Young, PPOC President & CEO. "It is another place where families get a voice in how our practices provide care."

At Partners HealthCare, the statewide PES is providing practices with actionable data to meet their standards for patient-centered care. "With our evolution towards patient-centered medical homes, the statewide patient experience survey data is even more actionable," said Colleen Blanchette, Patient-centered Medical Home (PCMH) Director at Partners HealthCare. "We use patient experience data to identify areas for opportunity and we help practices interpret the data so they can make improvements."

To learn more about how these organizations are using the statewide PES results to improve patient-centered care, view the [Acknowledgements page](#) on the HealthcareCompassMA Website. Individuals and families can use [www.healthcarecompassma.org](http://www.healthcarecompassma.org) to compare physician practices based on factors that are most important to them and make more educated decisions on where they should get their primary care. Patients can also learn more about how to get the most out of their primary care visits and become more engaged in their health and healthcare.

"We see some very exciting changes underway that have the potential to greatly improve the way healthcare is organized, delivered and paid for, but they come with challenges and risks as well," said Rabson. "By keeping the needs and goals of patients and their families front and center, we can avoid some of the pitfalls of the past and drive measurable improvements in healthcare quality, patients' experiences of care, and the use of resources."

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## **KEY PES FACTS AND TRENDS**

- MHQP fields its survey annually. In 2014 approximately 64,000 people responded to the survey. More than 44,000 assessed their experiences of care and 20,000 parents responded to surveys about their children's care experiences.
- Massachusetts patients give high ratings to their primary care providers when asked about key interactions they had with the healthcare system. At the same time, patients experienced significant differences in their care among individual practices in all parts of the state.
- High-quality care can be found just about anywhere in the state, and there are primary care practices in all parts of the state that earned the highest possible rating in all of MHQP's patient experience measures.
- In 2014, those practices that needed to improve made the greatest gains, and already high performing practices achieved even higher performance on average.
- MHQP's statewide Patient Experience Survey (PES) results are the only data that allow provider organizations to see multiple aspects of their performance benchmarked against their peers.
- MHQP's 2015 Patient Experience Survey is currently in the field, and results will be reported in 2016.

### **About MHQP ([mhqp.org](http://mhqp.org))**

Massachusetts Health Quality Partners (MHQP) is a non-profit, broad-based coalition established in 1995 that provides reliable information to help physicians improve the quality of care they provide their patients and help consumers take an active role in making informed decisions about their health care. MHQP's mission is to drive measureable improvements in health care quality, patients' experiences of care, and use of resources in Massachusetts through patient and public engagement and broad-based collaboration among health care stakeholders, including physicians, hospitals, health plans, purchasers, patient and public advocates, government agencies, and academics.