

Engaging Patients in the CAHPS 2012 Survey: Social Workers as Care Advocates

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Introduction

- In 2012, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) required dialysis providers to administer the 58-question Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) patient experience survey to chronic in-center hemodialysis patients.
- -CAHPS survey is 6.25% of the total quality improvement (QIP) score for CMS.
- Providers were directed to use a third party vendor, applying the survey via mail, phone, or combined methodology, but were permitted to operationalize the survey administration as best suited to each provider.
- The administration of an industry-wide tool had never been tested, nor were response rates easily predictable.
- DaVita developed a strategy that included a 3-step, follow-up process to improve patient response rate to the CMS survey.

Objective

To determine if the strategy developed for the annual CMS survey achieved effective patient response rate.

Methods

- DaVita HealthCare Partners, Inc, and a vendor administered the CAHPS survey between September 2012 and November 2012.
- Dialysis center staff received pre-education about the survey process.
 Social workers and care givers provided education to each in-center hemodialysis patient, encouraging participation.
- -"Survey champions" were identified in each center
- The 3-step mail/phone methodology included:
- The vendor mailed a prenotification letter, followed by a survey to patient addresses.
- Nonresponders received a postcard, followed by a second survey via mail.
- -Continuing nonresponders were contacted by telephone.
- From dialysis center-specific results, improvement plans were generated.
- Patients were informed about dialysis center-specific results and the improvement plans.

Results

- From 113,583 administered surveys (1,809 were ineligible) 52,410 were completed (39.0% mail, 7.2% phone), achieving an overall response rate of 46.9% (Table 1).
- Response rate of 46.9% exceeded all benchmarks:
- Historical DaVita in-center survey results (33.0% to 36.0%)
- Hospital historical benchmarks (30.0% to 35.0%)
- Study expectations (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: 40.0%)
- Industry response (unconfirmed) (43.0% to 45.0%)
- Response rate by geographic region ranged from 45%-50% with the highest rate in the Midwest (Table 2 and Figure 1).
- Response rates decreased with increasing facility size (Table 3 and Figure 2); largest response rate (51.9%) was in facilities with fewer than 50 patients, and smallest response rate (37.8%) was in facilities with more than 250 patients.
- Reasons for nonresponse included no response to phone messages (14.1%), refusals (9.0%), no response (5.8%), language barriers (2.3%), callbacks (2.3%), and partial responses (0.9%). Some patients expired during the survey period. Low responses came from homeless and nursing home patients. Center staff reported problems with health literacy and patients' reading skills. For dialysis centers located within prisons, we had no responses.

Table 1. Summary of 2012 CAHPS Survey Response Rate Results

	n		% of Total Sample
Facilities	1,857		
Sample			
Eligible	111,774	98.41%	
Ineligible	1,809	1.59%	
Total	113,583	100.00%	
Responses	n	% of Responses	% of Total Sample
Completed by mail	44,269	84.47%	38.98%
Completed by phone	8,141	15.53%	7.17%
Total	52,410	100.00%	46.14%
Contact Information	n	% of Contact Info	% of Total Sample
Incorrect address/phone number	20,152	99.82%	17.74%
No address/phone number	36	0.18%	0.03%
Total	20,188	100.00%	17.77%
Nonresponders	n	% of Nonresponders	% of Total Sample
Answering machine	16,070	41.02%	14.15%
Refusals	10,273	26.22%	9.04%
No response	6,596	16.84%	5.81%
Language	2,607	6.65%	2.30%
Callback	2,570	6.56%	2.26%
Partial response by mail	1,060	2.71%	0.93%
Partial response by phone	0	0.00%	0.00%
Incapacitated/disabled	0	0.00%	0.00%
Incarcerated	0	0.00%	0.00%
Total	39,176	100.00%	34.49%

Table 2. 2012 CAHPS Survey Response Rate by Region

Response Rates	
48.0%	
47.0%	
50.0%	
45.0%	
45.5%	
	48.0% 47.0% 50.0% 45.0%

Figure 1. 2012 CAHPS Survey Results by Region

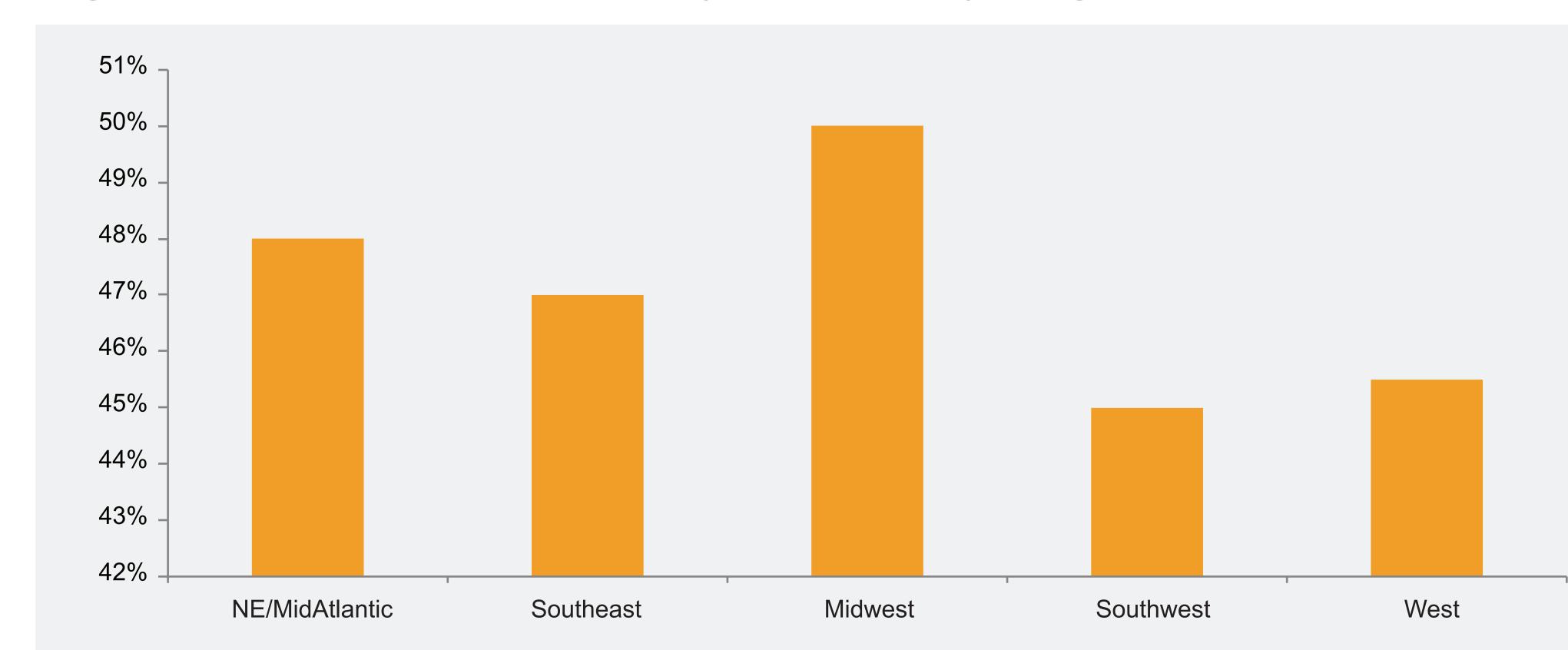
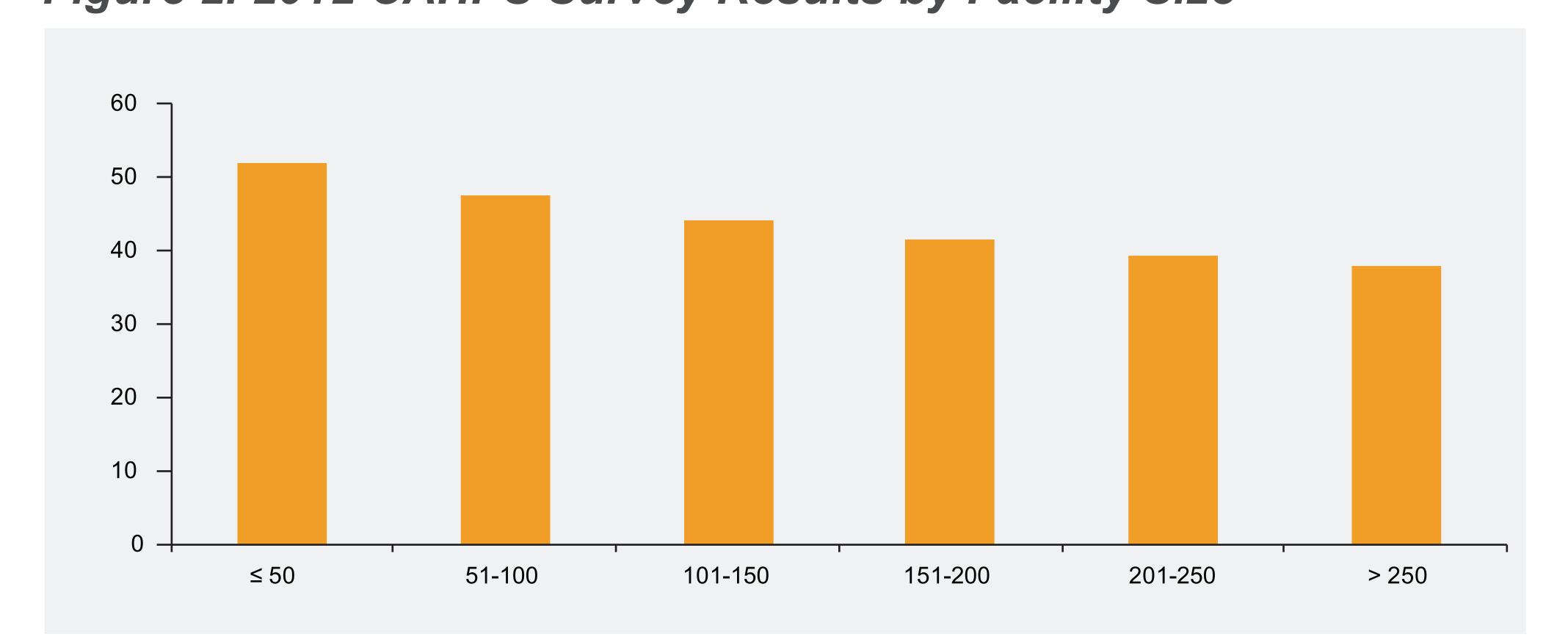


Table 2. 2012 CAHPS Survey Response Rate by Facility Size

Facility Size	n	Response Rates
≤ 50	823	51.9%
51-100	1,113	47.4%
101-150	201	44.0%
151-200	38	41.5%
201-250	6	39.2%
> 250	4	37.8%

Figure 2. 2012 CAHPS Survey Results by Facility Size



Discussion

Lessons learned include:

- Patient contact information needed to be clarified and corrected
- Survey administration was challenging in special populations (eg, homeless, nursing homes, prisons)
- Patients required more assistance than anticipated
- Patients had questions regarding privacy concerns and unclear wording of survey questions
- CMS-imposed restrictions prevented dialysis staff from assisting patients with survey administration challenges (eg, lost envelopes)

Future actions include:

- Use earlier and ongoing efforts to confirm and/or correct patient contact information
- Create and implement specialized training to enhance the social worker role as experience of care manager
- Develop additional patient education tool around health literacy, privacy concerns, modality and transplant topics, and confusing survey questions
- Align day-to-day language with CAHPS survey language (eg, "blood test results" and "peritoneal")
- Explore off-cycle timing of survey administration and more flexible survey administration conduct by providers and vendors

Conclusions

Intense patient advocacy by social workers resulted in high participation of patients dialyzed in DaVita HealthCare Partners centers. Achieving greater participation will require developing more effective approaches to specific patient groups. Utility of the survey would be enhanced by including home modalities and addressing challenges in health literacy.

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