

# Questions and Answers

## Medical Provider Component

M E D I C A L   E X P E N D I T U R E   P A N E L   S U R V E Y

**SEPARATELY  
BILLING DOCTORS**

### What is the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS)?

MEPS is a nationwide research study conducted to learn more about the health care services people use, the charges for those services and the sources that pay for them. MEPS is conducted annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Major components of MEPS include surveys of:

- A nationally representative sample of households;
- Hospitals, physicians, and pharmacies reported by the household participants; and
- Providers of health insurance.

MEPS is the most complete source of data available on health care use and expenses in the United States and is used by government policymakers and private researchers.

### How are practitioners chosen for the MEPS Separately Billing Doctor Component?

Practitioners are identified by respondents during the hospital data collection using the patient's medical record. These identified practitioners have provided health care to the patient in a hospital setting and billed the patient separately for medical services they have provided. The patient has signed a HIPAA compliant authorization form which authorizes and requests medical care providers to release information sought by the study.

### Why should this practice participate?

Expenditures from practitioners who bill for their services separately from the hospital are a major component of health care costs. The information that you supply will supplement that given by your patient and help us build a more complete picture of health care expenditures for respondents in our study. Your patients have asked specifically for your help by signing the authorization form.

### What information is needed?

For each of the patients on the enclosed list, we need information about their medical events. For each date of service in 2009, we need:

- Date of service
- Services provided (CPT-4, revenue code, HCPCS, or description)
- Total charge
- Payment sources and amounts

### How do I know the information will be kept confidential?

The confidentiality of data collected for MEPS is protected by Federal law under Sections 934(c) and 308(d) of the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 299c-3(c) and 242m(d)] and will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Identifying information collected for the study cannot be released for another purpose without the permission of the individuals or establishments who provided the information or are described in it.

Personal identifying information such as names or addresses are removed before information from the study is made available to researchers. Findings are published in statistical summaries and tables and micro-data is released on "public use" data files.

### Who is collecting this data?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has chosen RTI International (RTI) and Social and Scientific Systems, Inc. (SSS) to administer the study. A professionally trained data collection specialist from RTI-SSS will contact each medical provider.

### What questions will the data collected answer?

MEPS data provide answers to many important questions. For example:

- How much of medical costs are covered by insurance?
- What do people pay out of pocket for their medical care?
- What conditions are being treated by medical providers?
- What types of health care services are people receiving from medical providers?

### Any further questions?

Please call toll-free, at  
[FILL APPROPRIATE RTI/SSS  
NUMBER: 1-800-XXX-XXXX.]

For direct access to information  
about MEPS, go to  
<http://www.meps.ahrq.gov>.