



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

**Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention**

**National Center for Health
Statistics
3311 Toledo Road
Hyattsville, Maryland 20782**

Dear

We would like to request your participation in the National Hospital Discharge Survey (NHDS), a component of the National Hospital Care Survey, conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Since 1965, NHDS, authorized by Section 306 of the Public Service Act, has been a primary source of information on the nation's inpatient use in short-stay, non-federal hospitals. From 2011, NHDS will become an electronic data collection, gathering Uniform Bill (UB) 04 claims data. We plan to collect patient identifiers for discharges so that we can link to birth and death records and potentially link to data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Participation in NHDS is completely voluntary. You or your staff may refuse to answer any question or may stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. Your participation allows us to better accurately describe hospitals like yours in our national statistics and help us to continue to serve as a resource to the hospital community, health care researchers, and policy makers. Participating hospitals in the NHDS will receive a one time \$500 set-up fee and an additional \$500 for each year of data collection.

No information collected in this study will be published in any manner that will allow identification of individual hospitals or patients. Be assured that there are several ways that the Privacy Rule (as mandated by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act [HIPAA]) allows you to participate. In particular, disclosures of patient data are permitted for public health purposes and for research that has been approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB), both of which apply to this study. The IRB at CDC's NCHS has reviewed and approved all aspects of this study. Included in the enclosures is the "Frequently Asked Questions". Please note, in particular, the detailed section on confidentiality and use of data.

Please be assured that we are required by law to keep all data regarding patients and facilities strictly confidential and to use these data only for research and statistical purposes as stated by Section 308(d) of the Public Health Service Act [42 United States Code 242m (d) and Section 513 of the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (PL-107-347)].

The NCHS has contracted with Research Triangle Institute (RTI) International, a non-profit research organization, to assist in this task. The hospital recruitment for the survey will be conducted by Social and Scientific Systems (SSS), a sub-contractor of RTI. A representative from SSS will telephone you to arrange for an appointment to discuss the possibility of your hospital's participation in the NHDS. If you have questions, please feel free to call Ms. Deborah Bittner, the SSS Project Director, at (301) 628-0322 or Dr. Carol DeFrances, Team Leader of the Hospital Care Team at NCHS, at (301) 458-4440.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Sondik, Ph.D.
Director, National Center for Health Statistics
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Enclosures

Introduction and Background

The National Hospital Care Survey (NHCS) is a new survey that integrates inpatient data formerly collected by the National Hospital Discharge Survey and emergency department (ED), outpatient department (OPD), and ambulatory surgery center (ASC) data collected by the National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey. Beginning in 2011, a sample of hospitals will be recruited for this survey. During the first 2 years of the survey, hospitals will be asked to provide data on all inpatients from their Uniform Bill (UB)–04 administrative database, as well as facility-level data through a facility questionnaire. In 2013, in addition to inpatient data, the hospitals will be asked to provide data on the utilization of health care services provided in their EDs, OPDs, and ASCs. Also in 2013, a sample of freestanding ASCs will be recruited.

Purpose of the New Survey

NHCS will provide nationally representative data on the utilization of hospital care and other statistics on inpatient care, as well as care delivered in inpatient, emergency, and outpatient departments and in hospital-based and freestanding ASCs. The collection of personal identifiers (protected health information) will allow the linking of care provided to the same patient in the ED, OPD, ASC, and inpatient department. These identifiers will also permit encounters to be linked to the National Death Index

to measure postdischarge mortality, and to Medicare and Medicaid data to obtain a more complete picture of patient care. Gathering all UB–04 data from a hospital will permit the sampling of hospital discharges with specific diagnoses and procedures for special studies that will use medical record abstraction to collect clinical data.

Participation

Your hospital was selected randomly from among all hospitals in the United States. Another hospital cannot be chosen in place of your hospital because this would jeopardize the nationally representative nature of the survey.

Starting in 2011, participation includes completing an annual facility questionnaire and transmitting all of your hospital's UB–04 records to a secure server. In 2013, participation will include ED, OPD, and/or ASC data collection along with UB–04 data.

Participation in this project is voluntary, and there is no penalty for not participating. However, the success of the survey depends on the willingness of health care professionals like you to provide information on current health care services in the United States. In addition, health information management staff will be eligible for continuing education credits for taking time to learn about the survey at: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhcs/continuing_education.htm.

Data Collection

The facility questionnaire requests descriptive information, including hospital characteristics, clinical capabilities and services, types of revenue sources, and health information technology. We anticipate that the facility questionnaire will require input from several individuals on your hospital's staff, such as administrative, medical records, billing, or finance staff, and will take about 2 hours to complete.

We are asking that you electronically transmit all UB–04 claims data to a secure server. We anticipate that it will take approximately 1 hour to prepare and transmit the file, and we are asking that you transmit these data from your hospital every 3 months.

Your hospital may also be selected to participate in special studies that use record abstraction. As with all other aspects of this survey, these special studies will be voluntary.

Confidentiality and Data Safeguarding

All information that would permit identification of an individual or hospital participating in this survey is kept strictly confidential. Survey participants receive assurance of this confidentiality under the Public Health Services Act.

All project staff members have signed confidentiality agreements and are prohibited by law from using the information they receive for anything other than this project. Any other use is a violation of federal law and is subject to heavy fines and imprisonment. Compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and its Privacy Rule allows hospitals to disclose protected health information without patient authorization for public health purposes. Additionally, the Institutional Review Board of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) has approved the national survey. This data collection effort is approved by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

Sponsorship

This project is sponsored by NCHS. The mission of NCHS is to provide statistical information that will guide actions and policies to improve the health of the American people. As the Nation's principal health statistics agency, NCHS leads the way with accurate, relevant, and timely data.

NHCS is being conducted for NCHS by RTI International, a nonprofit research firm. Social & Scientific Systems, Inc. (SSS), a subcontractor to RTI, will be recruiting hospitals on behalf of NCHS.

For More Information

If you have not already been contacted, an SSS project staff member will contact you by telephone shortly to discuss your participation in this important project.

For any concerns or questions, you may contact the SSS Recruitment Manager, Ms. Lourdes Suárez, at **877-321-6437**.

You can also contact the following individuals at NCHS to confirm that RTI and SSS are conducting this project for the Center:

Dr. Carol DeFrances,
Team Leader of the Hospital Care Team

301-458-4440

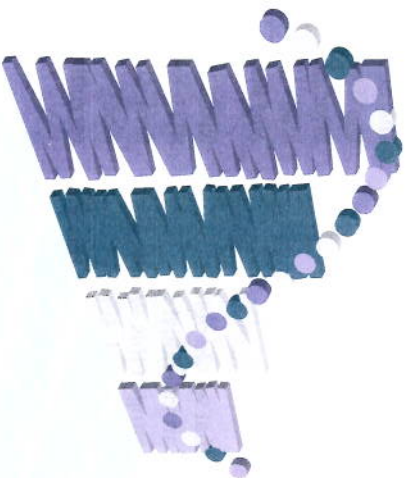
cdefrances@cdc.gov

or

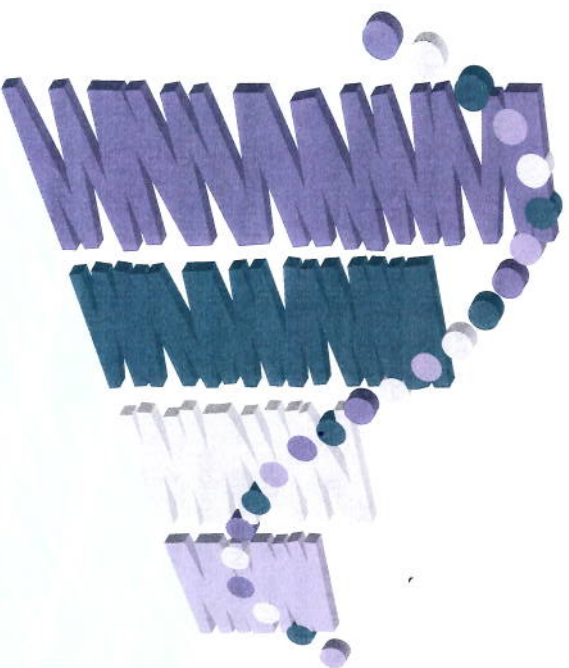
Mr. David Woodwell,
Team Leader of the Ambulatory Care Team

301-458-4592

dwoodwell@cdc.gov



An Introduction to the National Hospital Care Survey



Sponsored by:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Health Statistics



Protecting the public's privacy...no idle pledge

There is safety in numbers, especially our numbers!

The law . . .

Information collected in the National Health Care Survey (NHCS) is used for research and statistical purposes. No information that could identify a person or establishment can be released to anyone—including the President, Congress, or any court—without the consent of the provider.

The affidavit . . .

Anyone working for the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) must sign an affidavit—a legal document making them subject to the Privacy Act, the Public Health Service Act, and other laws.

The penalties . . .

Unauthorized disclosure of confidential statistical information is considered a class E felony that is punishable by imprisonment for up to 5 years, a fine of \$250,000, or both.

The record . . .

Since its first survey in 1957, NCHS has not released any confidential information to anyone not entitled to have it.

NCHS is well known for the high quality statistical information it provides. Maintaining that level of quality is not possible unless those who provide us with this information can be guaranteed confidentiality.

The confidentiality of records is of primary concern to NCHS. This principle is firmly grounded in federal laws, including the Privacy Act, the Public Health Service Act, the E-Government Act of 2002, and Title 18 of the United States Code. NCHS staff must sign a pledge to obey these laws and associated regulations to prevent disclosure of information, and they must follow strict procedures concerning data access, physical protection of records, avoidance of disclosure, and maintenance of confidentiality.

Unblemished record for maintaining privacy during data collection and processing

NCHS collaborates with other organizations, for example, the U.S. Census Bureau and private research companies, to collect and process data for NCHS. These groups have an impeccable record of protecting the privacy of survey respondents.

HIPAA Privacy Rule on health information and survey participation

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule permits you to make disclosures of protected health information without patient authorization for public health purposes and for research that has been approved by an institutional review board (IRB) with a waiver of patient authorization. The NCHS meets both of these

criteria. As part of the IRB approval process, reviews were conducted of the surveys' procedures for handling protected health information, and practices were determined to be appropriate for safeguarding respondent confidentiality. Additionally, disclosures may be made under a data-use agreement with NCHS for some surveys that do not collect directly identifiable data.

Copies of IRB approval letters and other related materials, such as data-use agreements, are available upon request for each component survey of the NHCS. There are several things that you must do to assure compliance with the Privacy Rule when participating in the survey. First, the privacy notice that you generally provide to your patients must indicate that patient information may be disclosed for either research or public health purposes. Second, you may need to keep a record of the disclosure that shows that some data from the patient's medical record were disclosed to CDC for NCHS (we will provide forms to assist you in record keeping). If you do not transmit health information electronically (such as claims data), you are not subject to the Privacy Rule or the requirements described above.

For additional information on the HIPAA Privacy Rule, see:

<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa>

Other safeguards for your privacy

- ▣ Items that could be used, either directly or indirectly, to identify health care providers or their patients are removed from public-use data files. Names, addresses, dates of birth, dates of service, and location of the health care establishment are never released to the public.
- ▣ NCHS withholds statistical totals if they represent a location so small that the numbers might identify someone.
- ▣ Information security procedures, including use of coded passwords and physical security of computers, prevent unauthorized access to the data.
- ▣ The restriction on who sees personal information extends from the highest levels of our government (we can deny the President and any member of Congress access to confidential information as well as Immigration, Justice, and IRS officials) to the kinds of inquiries we are all increasingly worried about (market research firms, insurance companies, employers). Your survey responses are also protected from the Freedom of Information Act as well as court subpoenas.
- ▣ All published summaries are presented in such a way that no respondent can be identified.

We believe that our procedures for safeguarding information and our record of protecting the privacy of respondents are reasons why so many providers readily participate and provide reliable, high quality information. As a result, ample representative and accurate statistical information on health care utilization is made available every year to the American public, health care providers, the U.S. government, and the research community.

For further information

NCHS data are released in printed reports, CD-ROMs, and on the NCHS website,

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/>

For more information about how NCHS protects the information you provide, see:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/policy/ confidentiality.htm>

or contact:

Information Dissemination Staff
3311 Toledo Road, Room 5412
Hyattsville, MD 20782

For specific questions about how NCHS protects the information you provide, contact:

Confidentiality Officer
Eve Powell-Griner, Ph.D.
3311 Toledo Road, Room 7116
Hyattsville, MD 20782

Telephone: (888) 642-4159
E-mail: EPowell-Griner@cdc.gov

How the National Health Care Surveys Keep Your Information

Strictly

Confidential

National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey
National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey
National Survey of Ambulatory Surgery
National Survey of Discharge Survey
National Survey of Residential Care Facilities
National Nursing Home Survey
National Hospital Care Survey



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