

Attachment E: Ambulatory Intro Letter to Hospitals, EDs, OPDs and ASLs

Date

Dear XXXXXX,

I am writing to thank you for your participation in the inpatient component of the National Hospital Care Survey (NHCS) conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics. You may remember when we originally contacted your hospital about participating in the NHCS, in addition to inpatient data; we discussed the need to collect data on the utilization of health care services provided by your emergency department (ED), outpatient department (OPD), and ambulatory surgery locations. We are contacting you now to notify you that we are preparing to collect ambulatory data at your hospital.

First, we will conduct an interview to collect descriptive data on your hospital's characteristics, including electronic health record adoption, ED crowding, and visit volume. Our staff will then abstract data from medical records on a sample of patient visits in several ambulatory units within the hospital including EDs, OPD clinics, and ambulatory surgery locations. Patient identifiers will be collected so that data can be linked to birth and death records and potentially linked to data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Many organizations and leaders in the health care community, including those providing the enclosed letters of endorsement, have expressed their support and join me in urging your participation in this meaningful study.

CDC's National Center for Health Statistics is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the data collected for this study. All information collected will be held confidential according to Section 308(d) of the Public Health Service Act (42, U.S. Code, 242m(d)) and the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (Title 5 of PL 107-347) and will be used for statistical purposes only. Provisions of the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act provide for a felony conviction and/or fine up to \$250,000 if this promise is violated.

Additionally, the Privacy Rule as mandated by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) allows your hospital to participate in several ways.

- Disclosure of patient data is permitted for public health purposes.
- NHCS has been approved by the CDC/National Center for Health Statistics' Research Ethics Review Board.

The Data Collector assigned to your hospital from Westat, acting as our agent, will be contacting you soon about your hospital's voluntary participation in the ambulatory component of the NHCS. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Kathy Chimes, the Westat Project Director (phone: (301) 251-4302, e-mail: chimesk1@westat.com) or myself, Dr. Carol DeFrances, Team Leader, National Hospital Care Survey (phone: (301) 458-4440, e-mail: cdefrances@cdc.gov).

Sincerely,

Carol DeFrances, Ph.D.
Team Leader, National Hospital Care Survey