

Attachment F.1

NHAMCS introductory letter



National Center for Health Statistics
3311 Toledo Road
Room 3409
Hyattsville, Maryland 20782

NHAMCS
Endorsing Organizations

American College of
Emergency Physicians
(ACEP)

American College of
Osteopathic Emergency
Physicians (ACOEP)

Emergency Nurses
Association (ENA)

Society of Academic
Emergency Medicine
(SAEM)

Society of Academic
Emergency Anesthesia
(SAMBA)

The American Health
Information Management
Association (AHIMA)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) has been conducting the National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NHAMCS), an annual study of hospital-based outpatient care, since 1992. The purpose of this study is to collect information about the large portion of ambulatory care provided by hospital emergency departments throughout the United States. The information requested includes data about patient visits, and hospital and department characteristics.

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. You may refuse to participate or choose not to answer any question at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. Your participation in the study will be of no direct benefit to you or your hospital, however, it will ensure that hospitals like yours are represented in research that examines the utilization and provision of hospital-based ambulatory medical care services in the United States.

The study will be conducted in three phases using an electronic questionnaire and will focus on a sample of patient encounters during a randomly assigned 4-week reporting period. A representative of the Census Bureau, acting as our agent, will be calling you to schedule an appointment regarding the details of your participation.

During the first phase, the representative will conduct an interview with you or your designee that focuses on some of the characteristics of your hospital and the capabilities of your electronic health records system; it should take a little over an hour. For the second phase, each Emergency Service Area administrator or their designee is interviewed to determine eligible ambulatory care service areas; it should take about 30 minutes. The final phase, which requires minimal input from your staff, is the abstraction of sampled patient encounters from your medical records. In the weeks following the completion of this study, some hospitals may be contacted again for a reabstraction study which is conducted as a quality control measure. This study, also voluntary, would involve only a fraction of the originally abstracted medical records.

NCHS employees and agents, including employees of the Census Bureau, comply with the requirements of Section 308(d) of the Public Health Service Act (42 United States Code 242m(d)), the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA, Title 5 of Public Law 107-347), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) (Public Law 104-191), and the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. § 552a. NCHS and U.S. Census Bureau employees working on this study are required by law to keep all information about your hospital and patients confidential. This information is subject to all of the published routine uses as identified in the Privacy Act System of Records Notice 09-20-0167 Health Resources Utilization Statistics.

In addition, NCHS complies with the Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015 (6 U.S.C. §§ 151 and 151 note). The Act permits monitoring of information systems for the purpose of protecting a network from hacking, denial of service attacks and other security vulnerabilities. The software used for monitoring may scan information that is transiting, stored on, or processed by the system. If the information triggers a cyber-threat indicator, the information may be intercepted and reviewed for cyber threats. The Cybersecurity Act specifies if any information that is scanned by the cybersecurity software programs is found to be suspicious, it may be reviewed for specific threats by computer network experts working for the government (or contractors or agents who have governmental authority to do so). The Act further specifies that such information may only be used for the purpose of protecting information and information systems from cybersecurity risks.

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If you have any questions regarding your participation, please call a NHAMCS representative at (800) 223-3815. Or, if you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research study, please call the NCHS Research Ethics Review Board, toll free, at (800) 223-8118. Visit the NHAMCS participants website for more information about the survey (https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/ahcd/nhamcs_participant.htm). We greatly appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Charles J. Rothwell
Director