

HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CARE POLICY

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To: Potential HPQ Users
From: Ron Kessler
Re: News notes: The Clinical Trials Version of the HPQ
Date: August 1, 2002

Potential users should be aware that we now have a clinical trials version of the HPQ. The clinical trials version has separate baseline and tracking assessments. The chronic conditions checklist and questions about health care utilization are omitted from the clinical trials version because the focus in clinical trials is on work impairment associated with the illness being treated in the trial.

Those of you who are interested exclusively in the survey version should nonetheless be aware that a number of clinical trials are now using the HPQ. This is noteworthy because it means that you will be able to make interesting comparisons using identical measures between surveys and treatment trials. For example, your survey might show that arthritis leads to a 17% reduction in work productivity in your company based on the HPQ metric, while a treatment trial might show that a new arthritis treatment improves productivity 14% on that same metric. Blending the results in this way will let you see that the vast majority of the impairment found in your survey could be removed with treatment. Or you might find the opposite – condition X leads to 35% impairment in your survey and treatment only leads to 4% reduction in this decrement. In either case, whether new treatments appear to be cost-effective or not, you will be able to compare apples with apples rather than apples with oranges by using the HPQ.

Why do we need to ask about chronic conditions?

Some people have asked us why we need to ask about chronic conditions and service use for these conditions in the survey version of the HPQ. Couldn't you simply use the work performance questions alone? You could. But before going down that route, let me tell you why it's important to ask also about chronic conditions. The entire purpose of studying productivity and health is to collect information on hidden costs. A critical part of hidden costs involve people who have health problems that are not being treated. In order to capture this part of the puzzle, we need to go beyond claims data (i.e., people who are being treated) and ask about health problems in the total work force. The national HPQ bench mark survey and the international WHO HPQ surveys all administer the HPQ chronic conditions checklist to general population samples that include both people who do not get treatment and people who do get treatment. We also ask about

treatment for each condition reported. This allows us to do statistical analyses to estimate the costs to the employer of lost productivity associated with untreated chronic conditions and separately with treated chronic conditions. This kind of information is critical if you want to know about investment opportunities associated with various kinds of workplace screening activities. It's also critical if you want to monitor the performance of your health plan in getting people into treatment with health problems that cause work impairment. These are core issues for an investigation of health and work performance. It's consequently critical that you include the chronic conditions checklist in your HPQ surveys.

National benchmarking results

We're just now finalizing the national bench marking data set with norms on all the health and performance questions. This will be posted on our web page as soon it is ready to go. <http://www.hcp.med.harvard.edu/hpq> .

Collaboration with the NBCH

We have established a collaboration with the National Business Coalition on Health to disseminate the HPQ technology to all members of the NBCH throughout the country. Survey length: Can the survey be reduced?

Some people have concerns about the length of the HPQ. You should note that some of the questions in the HPQ survey version could be deleted without loss of generality of results if the survey is identified and you have information about the respondent from separate sources. For example, you may know the age and sex and income and occupation of all potential respondents, in which case these questions can be deleted from the survey. We have procedures in our electronic version of the HPQ to make these deletions and to bring in these data from employer records.