



**American Hospital
Association**

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November 29, 2005

OMB Human Resources and Housing Branch
Attention: CMS Desk Officer
New Executive Office Building
Room 10235
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Sir or Madam:

On behalf of the American Hospital Association's (AHA) 4,800 member hospitals, health care systems, and other health care organizations, and our 33,000 individual members, we urge you to grant final approval to the patient experience of care survey, also known as Hospital CAHPS or HCAHPS.

HCAHPS enables hospitals to publicly report data on aspects of quality best assessed by the patient and complements the clinical quality measures already commonly reported on by most hospitals. While hospitals have been collecting and using patient perception information for quality improvement for more than 30 years, questions included in the HCAHPS survey are expected to provide the public with insights into the very issues about which consumers seek information when trying to compare hospitals' quality of care. Hospitals are committed to public transparency about their quality of care, and HCAHPS will enable them to provide valuable information to the communities they serve.

Following your final approval of the HCAHPS survey, the Hospital Quality Alliance, of which the AHA is a founding member, will ask hospitals to voluntarily begin collecting and sharing HCAHPS data. The collected data will be made available publicly through the Hospital Compare Web site (www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov). This process will begin as soon as the survey is finalized.



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November 29, 2005

Page 2

While there are implementation issues that still need to be worked through, the AHA is pleased that, in developing the survey, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality have revised the survey itself and the administration instructions to alleviate the major concerns that we originally raised with the draft form. We support the HCAHPS survey in its current form and urge you to allow this implementation to proceed by granting final approval. If you have additional questions, please contact Nancy Foster, AHA vice president for quality and patient safety policy, at (202) 626-2337 or nfoster@aha.org.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President