**CMS Leaves Us Asking, What Pain?**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has created a momentum in quality for Post-Acute Care (PAC) providers. The gold standard in measuring quality of care in a nursing facility is Nursing Home Compare’s (NHC) Five-star Quality Rating System. One of the domains in the system is the Quality Measures (QM) Domain. This domain is important because it can influence a facility’s overall star rating; scoring five stars in the QM Domain adds a star to the overall rating whereas scoring one star subtracts a star from the overall rating.

On September 4, 2019 the MDS 3.0 Quality Measure User’s Manual was updated to version 12.1 effective 10/1/19 accessible [here](https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/NursingHomeQualityInits/Downloads/MDS-30-QM-USERS-MANUAL-v121.pdf). In this version both the Short and Long-Stay pain measures: Percent of Residents Who Self-Report Moderate to Severe Pain were affected. A footnote was added indicating these measures would no longer be reported on NHC implying the measures would not be used to calculate the QM Domain of the Five-Star Quality Rating System. (In an email clarification, CMS indicated there will be more information in an upcoming memorandum.)

Together, the pain measures represent a range of 40 – 200 possible points removed from the scoring of the QM Domain. Since facilities rely on the QM Domain rating to either add a star to their overall rating or avoid losing a star from their overall rating, the loss of these points could have an adverse impact.

What could this mean for Kansas? In the two graphs that follow, seven Kansas regions’ average pain measure ratings (blue bar) and corresponding points scored are displayed. The points (orange bar) provides the number of points the average facility in these regions are scoring now and could potentially lose in the October 2019 reporting quarter when the measures are due to be removed. Graph 1 represents Short-Stay Pain and graph 2 Long-Stay Pain. Kansas State and National peer groups are included to provide relative performance.

Graph 1 Short-Stay Pain and Points Scored

Pain is a negative measure which means a lower rate is better performance. Kansas City Metropolitan Area is outperforming the Nation with the lowest rate of Short-Stay Self-Reported Pain or the best performance at 10.5%. This rate scores 60 points and therefore represents the region that could be highly affected by the removal of this measure for the calculation of their Five-Star Rating. The North Central and Flint Regions are outperforming Kansas State at 16.9 and 17% respectively. This rate scores 40 points and therefore both regions may be affected. The last 4 regions: Northwest, Wichita, Southeast Central and Southwest are underperforming the benchmarks with rates ranging from 20.8 – 21.6%. These rates score 20 points and therefore these regions may only be slightly affected.

Graph 2 Long-Stay Pain and Points Scored

Again, pain is a negative measure which means a lower rate is better performance. No region is outperforming the Nation in this measure; however, three regions are outperforming Kansas State, North Central, Flint and Kansas City Metropolitan Area with rates ranging from 8.9 – 9.8%. Southeast Central and Wichita regions are just underperforming Kansas State with rates of 11.5 and 11.8% respectively. These rates score 40 points and therefore represents regions that could be affected by the removal of this measure for the calculation of their Five-Star Rating. The last 2 regions: Southwest and Northwest are underperforming the benchmarks with rates of 13.3 and 16.8% respectively. These rates score 20 points and therefore these regions may only be slightly affected.

Quality Metrics was utilized to produce the analyses using data derived from NHC’s Five-Star Quality Rating System. The data collection periods are 1/1/18 - 3/31/19 for Short-Stay measures and 4/1/18 - 3/31/19 for Long-Stay.

How can these analyses be applied? Prepare for the October 2019 NHC refresh due October 24 by reviewing your July Five-Star Analysis Report QM Domain and answer these questions:

1. What was your performance on these two measures?
2. What are the points scored for these two measures?
3. If these points are removed, how will that effect the total quality measure score?
4. Will that score effect your QM Domain rating and or your overall rating?

Using the July data is just a prediction of how this could affect your October ratings.

If you subscribe to Quality Apex [www.qualityapex.com](http://www.qualityapex.com), compare your current pain measures ratings to the cut point table to calculate points scored. Then, subtract those points from the total QM Domain score to ascertain the effects of the change on your ratings. Doing either provides time to prepare a message and formulate a plan to restore your ratings. Share your message and plan with both internal and external customers explaining how CMS changed the quality measures, how that affected your ratings and your plan to restore your ratings.

**Know Your Data…**

Quality Metrics is a member benefit and can be accessed at the following website: <https://data.leadingageny.org>.

The Five-Star Analysis Report is a member benefit, and member facilities are provided with a quarterly email link to the report in January, April, July and October.

Author: Susan Chenail RN, CCM, RAC-CT Senior Quality Improvement Analyst LeadingAge New York

Questions? Email schenail@leadingageny.org