

What Patients Think About Their Hospitals and Ambulatory Surgery Centers

An Analysis of Patient Experience Surveys

Report Highlights

- Adult patients receiving inpatient hospital care overwhelmingly reported that they had been provided information on symptoms to monitor when they left the hospital, but on average, only half indicated that they clearly understood their transition to home. Additionally, adult inpatients were less likely to report the most positive rating regarding their experience with communication about medications.
- Patients tend to report positive experiences in both hospital outpatient departments (HOPDs) and ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs), with ASCs performing better on all four domains of patient experience.
- For children receiving hospital care, a lower percentage of parents and guardians, on average, reported positive experiences about their ability to report concerns.

Where the data comes from

This report analyzes patient experience data collected by hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) through a standardized survey called the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS). Information on CAHPS results for adult patients in hospitals is obtained from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), which requires general hospitals to publicly report their CAHPS results. Information on the experience of pediatric patients and same-day surgery patients, however, is not required by CMS, so this report uses data voluntarily provided by those facilities on the 2019 and 2020 Leapfrog Hospital Survey, the 2020 Leapfrog Ambulatory Surgery Center (ASC) Survey, and limited data from CMS when available.

The Leapfrog Surveys are developed with guidance from volunteer Expert Panels and receive scientific guidance from the Johns Hopkins Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality. Quality and safety data by facility for those that participate is available at www.ratings.leapfroggroup.org on measures such as maternity care, medication safety, infection rates, and surgical volumes.

Introduction

Patients are at the core of health care delivery. What patients report about their experience while receiving care can play a key role in transforming health care delivery to be more patient-centered and in improving the safety and quality of care. The Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) surveys are standardized patient surveys designed to measure patients' experience with the care they (or their children) received in a health care setting. Results from the CAHPS surveys can help patients make informed decisions about where to seek care and help providers set priorities for improvement based on how their performance is perceived by patients. Because CAHPS surveys are nationally standardized, they offer a fair comparison across providers.

The CAHPS Hospital Survey (HCAHPS) is the most well-known and widely used of the CAHPS surveys. Hospital-level survey results are collected and then publicly reported by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on its [Care Compare website](http://www.carecompare.com) and also used to generate [Patient Survey Ratings](#). The Leapfrog Group uses HCAHPS domains which have a direct tie to patient safety in calculating [Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grades](#).

Less widely known, though just as valuable, are two other CAHPS Surveys: the CAHPS Child Hospital Survey (Child HCAHPS), which measures the experience of pediatric patients and their parents or guardians in hospitals, and the CAHPS Outpatient and Ambulatory Surgery Survey (OAS CAHPS), which measures the experience of patients undergoing same-day surgery in hospitals or ASCs. Leapfrog recognizes the tremendous value these patient experience surveys can provide to those choosing where to seek care, so Leapfrog asks facilities participating in the Leapfrog Hospital Survey and Leapfrog Ambulatory Surgery Center (ASC) Survey about the results of the Child HCAHPS and OAS CAHPS Surveys administered to their patients. Without Leapfrog's public reporting of these [data](#), patients may struggle to find information on the experience of other patients at an ASC, HOPD, or hospital providing pediatric care. Leapfrog and its health care purchaser constituency call on all hospitals and ASCs across the U.S. to participate in the annual voluntary Leapfrog Surveys in order to provide patients with this critical data on quality and safety.

How Patient Experience Surveys Work

A random sample of patients who have been discharged from a hospital or had a surgery performed in an outpatient setting (hospital outpatient department or ASC) are identified and asked to complete a CAHPS survey. Surveys are most often administered by an experienced survey vendor and are distributed by mail, telephone, or electronically.

Across all areas on CAHPS surveys, participants are asked to check a box reflecting their experience with their care. Most frequently, these questions are phrased with response options like *Never, Sometimes, Usually, Always*; or *Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree*. Other times questions are phrased to ask for a 1 – 10 response, where 1 is the least favorable and 10 is the most favorable.

To evaluate overall facility performance on these surveys, Leapfrog looks at the “Top Box Scores,” which is the percent of survey respondents who chose the most positive response for a given item. For example, a patient may indicate that nurses *always* listened carefully to them or that they would *definitely* recommend the hospital to friends or family. Looking at the Top Box Score is an approach to understanding responses reflecting the most positive sentiment. In this report, the Top Box Score is referred to as the most favorable response (e.g., *Always* or *Strongly Agree*). To analyze the data included in this report, Leapfrog calculated the average Top Box Score among reporting facilities.

Example of a HCAHPS Survey question. In this case “Definitely yes” is the top box.

19. Would you recommend this hospital to your friends and family?

1 Definitely no

2 Probably no

3 Probably yes

4 Definitely yes

The “Top Box Score”

There are three types of CAHPS surveys reviewed in this report:

- The [CAHPS Hospital Survey](#) (HCAHPS) asks adult patients who have recently had an inpatient hospital stay about the care they received. It is required by CMS for most all general hospitals. In addition, critical access hospitals, veteran’s hospitals and others can voluntarily report their results to CMS.
- The [Child HCAHPS Survey](#) asks parents or guardians of pediatric patients who have recently had an inpatient hospital stay about the care their child received. The Leapfrog Group is the only national organization collecting and publicly reporting results from the Child HCAHPS.
- The [CAHPS Outpatient and Ambulatory Surgery Survey](#) (OAS CAHPS) asks adult patients who have recently had a same-day surgery in an ASC or in a HOPD about the care they received. The OAS CAHPS Survey is a voluntary component of the CMS quality reporting programs for ASCs and HOPDs. It is also collected and publicly reported via the Leapfrog Hospital and Leapfrog ASC Surveys.

Studies have shown that when used correctly, CAHPS results provide valid and reliable measures of quality and safety^{1,2}.

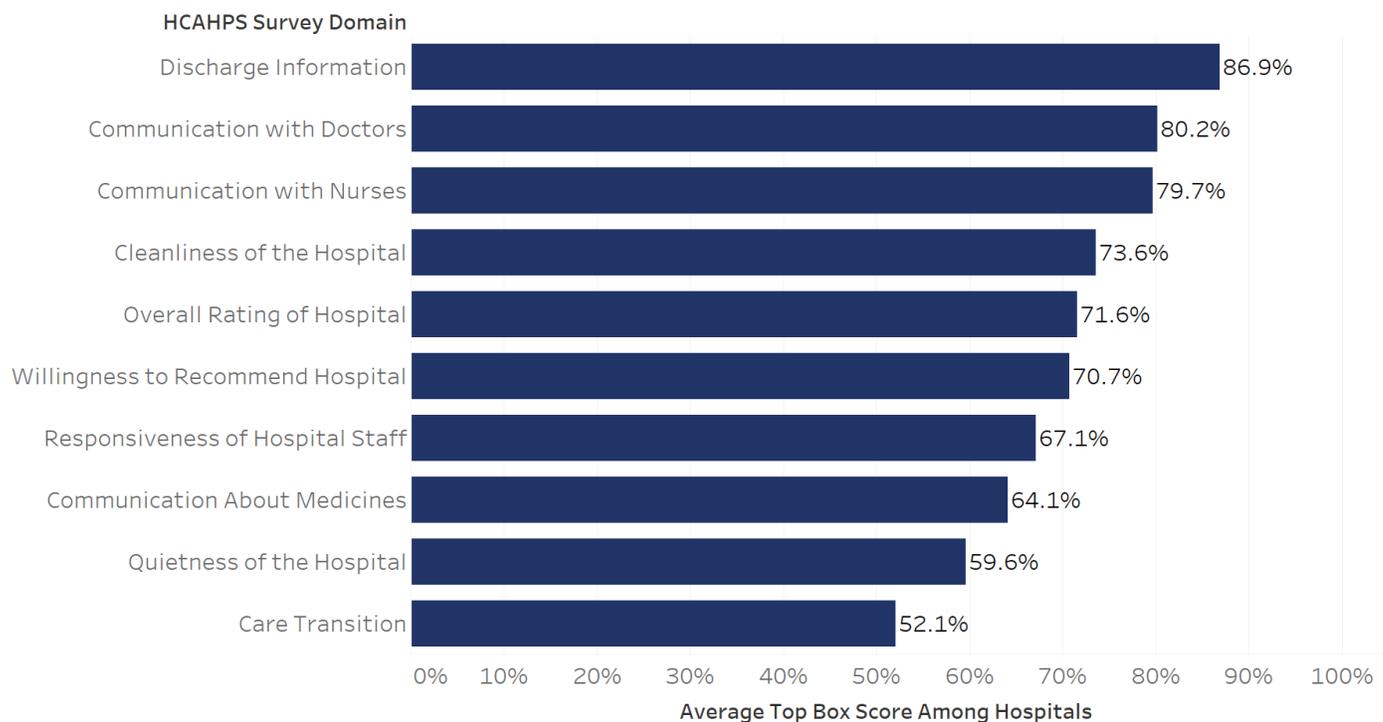
Adult Patient Experience at General Hospitals

HCAHPS, the patient experience survey for adult inpatients, asks about ten different areas of care. The ten areas of care and underlying questions, along with the response options, can be found in [Appendix A](#) of this report.

As shown in Figure 1, on average, seven in ten patients (70.7%) said that they would *Definitely* be willing to recommend the hospital to friends or family and a similar percentage (71.6%) gave the hospital a 9 or 10 out of 10 overall rating. About 80% of patients on average selected the most favorable response regarding communication with both doctors (80.2%) and nurses (79.7%).

An average of 86.9% of patients indicated that they were asked if they would have help at home and had received information about what symptoms to look for after being sent home from the hospital. However, of significant concern from a patient safety perspective, only an average of 52.1% of patients indicated that they clearly understood their care transition once they left the hospital in terms of their responsibilities and purpose of their medications, and that their preferences were taken into account. Providing clear, understandable discharge information, like symptoms or health problems to keep an eye out for, can reduce the likelihood of a patient being readmitted to the hospital.

Figure 1. Average Top Box Score (percent of patients who gave the most favorable response) on the 2019 inpatient patient experience (HCAHPS) survey (n=3,571 hospitals)



One of the areas where patients reported less favorable responses was in communication about medication (64.1%), another significant patient safety concern. This area reflects patients' feedback on how often hospital staff explained the purpose of any new medicine and what side effects that medicine might have. Effective communication about medicine can help reduce or prevent medication errors, which occur on average once per patient per day among Medicare beneficiaries³.

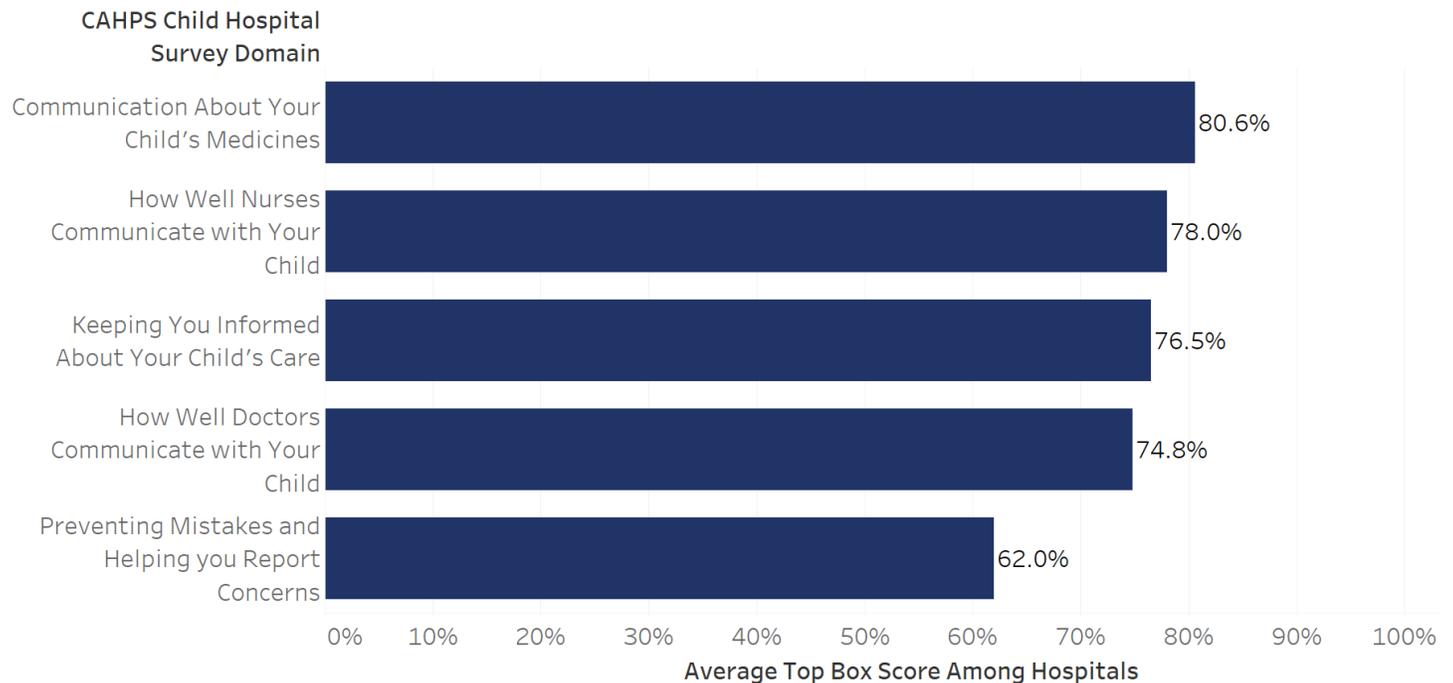
Pediatric Patient Experience in Hospitals

Without a doubt, parents whose children need hospital care only want the best for their child. Unfortunately, hospitals caring for pediatric patients are not required to report the results of Child HCAHPS in the same way that adult hospitals' HCAHPS results are reported. Recognizing this void of valuable information for parents, Leapfrog asks pediatric and general hospitals that care for pediatric patients to voluntarily report results of the Child HCAHPS to the annual Leapfrog Hospital Survey. Participating hospitals are asked to report on their CAHPS Child Hospital Survey results in five key areas. The underlying questions, along with the response options, can be found in [Appendix B](#) of this report.

As Figure 2 notes, on average, three-quarters or more of parents or caregivers gave the most favorable response to doctors' communication with their child (74.8%), nurses' communication with their child (78.0%), communication with parents about their child's care (76.5%), and communication about medications (80.6%).

However, the pediatric survey raises serious concerns about patient safety, with only an average of 62.0% giving the most favorable response on how well they felt equipped to prevent mistakes by reporting concerns. Included within this area are parent perspectives on how well the hospital administers medication, an essential step to prevent serious potential harm from medication errors, and whether or not hospitals empower parents and guardians with a welcoming, open environment for patients to report concerns. A parent by their child's bedside throughout a hospital stay may be better equipped than a medical provider to notice when something is wrong. Feeling prepared to speak up immediately when they observe problems is a critical patient safety indicator, improving the odds of preventing or reducing harm from errors.

Figure 2: Average Top Box Score (percent of parents or guardians who gave the most favorable response) on the child patient experience (Child HCAHPS) survey (n=99 hospitals)



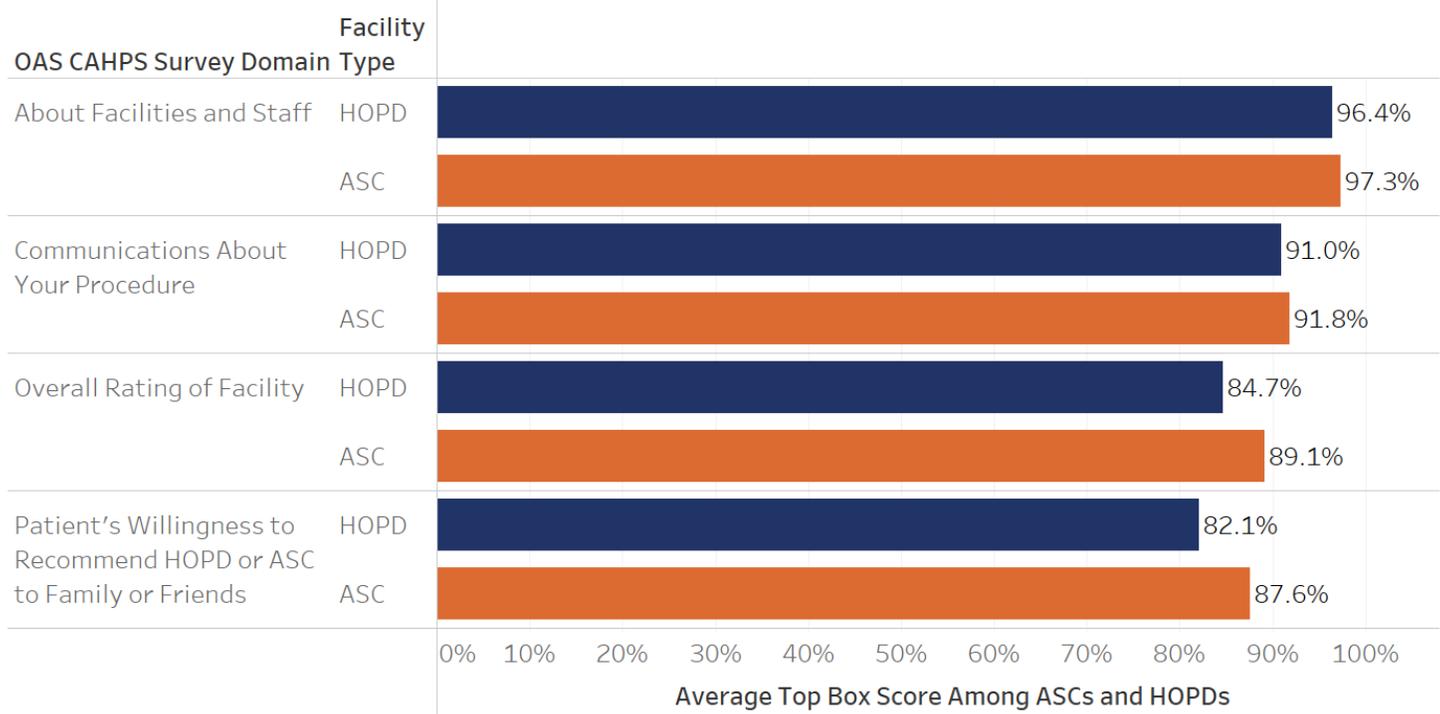
Source: 2019 and 2020 Leapfrog Hospital Surveys

Adult Patient Experience in Hospital Outpatient Departments and Ambulatory Surgery Centers

Over 60% of all surgeries are performed either in a hospital outpatient department (HOPD) or ambulatory surgery center (ASC). In almost all cases, patients who need a same-day procedure have the opportunity to research in advance where they would like to have their same-day surgery performed. Systematic patient experience survey findings are a valuable tool for that decision-making process, which is why Leapfrog publicly reports by facility on patient experience. The four areas of care examined on OAS CAHPS and underlying questions, along with the response options, can be found in [Appendix C](#) of this report.

As shown in Figure 3, adult patients report more favorable experiences from their same-day surgery facility than among those that had a same-day surgery performed at a hospital. In all four areas of patient experience, ASCs were rated statistically significantly better by their patients than patients of HOPDs. On average, patients at both ASCs (97.3%) and HOPDs (96.4%) gave the most favorable responses to how they were treated by staff and the cleanliness of the facility. Patients gave less favorable responses on their willingness to recommend the facility, with an average of 87.6% of ASC patients and 82.1% of HOPD patients indicating that they would definitely recommend the facility.

Figure 3: Average Top Box Score (percent of patients who gave the most favorable response) on the same-day surgery patient experience (OAS CAHPS) Survey (n=363 ASCs, 1,252 hospitals providing outpatient care)



Source: 2020 Leapfrog Hospital Survey, 2020 Leapfrog ASC Survey, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Conclusion

Leapfrog's assessment of CAHPS survey results across different settings of care suggests that despite some positive responses, significant challenges persist, particularly related to communicating about patient understanding of medication protocols, clarity about treatment following discharge, and overall communication. For pediatric patients in hospitals, there are exceptionally troubling signs with parents' ability to raise concerns about problems and mistakes regarding the care of their children. Outpatient surgical units and ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) have positive results generally. Regardless, all facilities show signs of patient safety challenges that hospitals and ASCs should address with urgency.

How to Find CAHPS Results by Facility

Results of inpatient hospital patient experience surveys are available on [CMS Care Compare](#). Users should select "Hospitals" and then search by facility name or location. Clicking on the "Patient Survey Rating" link will reveal details for that facility on the individual measures described in this report.

Results of pediatric patient experience surveys for facilities that voluntarily report to the Leapfrog Hospital Survey are available on [Leapfrog's Ratings Website](#). Users should search by name or location, click on a facility name, then scroll down to expand the "Pediatric Care" link. Results for the areas measured in this report are displayed under "Experience of Children and their Parents."

Results of same-day surgery patient experience surveys for facilities that voluntarily report to the Leapfrog Hospital Survey and Leapfrog ASC Survey are also available on [Leapfrog's Ratings Website](#). Users should search by name or location, click on a facility name, then scroll down to expand the "Care for Elective Outpatient Surgery Patients" link. Results for the areas measured in this report are displayed under "Experience of Patients Undergoing Elective Outpatient Surgery."

How to Use This Information

CAHPS Surveys are a useful tool for a variety of stakeholders, as long as the data is publicly available to them. All hospitals and ASCs can report to the Leapfrog Surveys at no cost. If a hospital or ASC declines to report to Leapfrog, employers, patients, and community members should contact facility leadership and ask them to do so. Additionally, pediatric hospitals, HOPDs, and ASCs should participate in CAHPS Surveys even though they are not required to do so. Insights gleaned from the results will help facility leaders understand how their patients experienced care in the facility and be able to identify gaps tied to safety and quality. Strong results on patient experience surveys can positively impact patients' decision-making.

Public reporting of patient experience has the opportunity to improve accountability, transparency, and the overall safety and quality of care. By focusing on the patient experience, health care providers can enhance their delivery of what all are aiming for: the best possible care for their patients. The tested and validated CAHPS surveys assure that the patient voice is accounted for and heard. They are a critical resource to improve quality and safety, and help future patients and families make informed decisions about where to seek care.

Appendix A: The CAHPS Hospital Survey

Communication with Nurses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During this hospital stay, how often did nurses treat you with courtesy and respect? (Never/Sometimes/Usually/Always) During this hospital stay, how often did nurses listen carefully to you? (Never/Sometimes/Usually/Always) During this hospital stay, how often did nurses explain things in a way you could understand? (Never/Sometimes/Usually/Always)
Communication with Doctors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During this hospital stay, how often did doctors treat you with courtesy and respect? (Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always) During this hospital stay, how often did doctors listen carefully to you? (Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always) During this hospital stay, how often did doctors explain things in a way you could understand? (Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always)
Responsiveness of Hospital Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During this hospital stay, after you pressed the call button, how often did you get help as soon as you wanted it? (Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always) How often did you get help in getting to the bathroom or in using a bedpan as soon as you wanted? (Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always)
Communication About Medicines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before giving you any new medicine, how often did hospital staff tell you what the medicine was for? (Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always) Before giving you any new medicine, how often did hospital staff describe possible side effects in a way you could understand? (Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always)
Discharge Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During this hospital stay, did doctors, nurses or other hospital staff talk with you about whether you would have the help you needed when you left the hospital? (Yes/ No) During this hospital stay, did you get information in writing about what symptoms or health problems to look out for after you left the hospital? (Yes/ No)
Care Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During this hospital stay, staff took my preferences and those of my family or caregiver into account in deciding what my health care needs would be when I left. (Strongly disagree/ Disagree/ Agree/ Strongly agree) When I left the hospital, I had a good understanding of the things I was responsible for in managing my health. (Strongly disagree/ Disagree/ Agree/ Strongly agree) When I left the hospital, I clearly understood the purpose for taking each of my medications. (Strongly disagree/ Disagree/ Agree/ Strongly agree)
Cleanliness of the Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During this hospital stay, how often were your room and bathroom kept clean? (Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always)
Quietness of the Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During this hospital stay, how often was the area around your room quiet at night? (Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always)
Willingness to Recommend Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would you recommend this hospital to your friends and family? (Definitely no/ Probably no/ Probably yes/ Definitely yes)
Overall Rating of Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst hospital possible and 10 is the best hospital possible, what number would you use to rate this hospital during your stay?

Survey Source: [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#)

Appendix B: CAHPS Child Hospital Survey

<p>How Well Doctors Communicate with Your Child</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During this hospital stay, how often did your child’s doctors listen carefully to your child? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>) • During this hospital stay, how often did your child’s doctors explain things in a way that was easy for your child to understand? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>) • During this hospital stay, how often did your child’s doctors encourage your child to ask questions? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>)
<p>How Well Nurses Communicate with Your Child</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During this hospital stay, how often did your child’s nurses listen carefully to your child? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>) • During this hospital stay, how often did your child’s nurses explain things in a way that was easy for your child to understand? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>) • During this hospital stay, how often did your child’s nurses encourage your child to ask questions? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>)
<p>Keeping You Informed About Your Child’s Care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During this hospital stay, how often did providers keep you informed about what was being done for your child? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>) • How often did providers give you as much information as you wanted about the results of tests like blood tests and x-rays? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>)
<p>Communication About Your Child’s Medicines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the first day of this hospital stay, were you asked to list or review all of the prescription medicines your child was taking at home? (<i>Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No</i>) • During the first day of this hospital stay, were you asked to list or review all of the vitamins, herbal medicines, and over-the-counter medicines your child was taking at home? (<i>Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No</i>) • Before your child left the hospital, did a provider or hospital pharmacist explain in a way that was easy to understand how your child should take new medicines after leaving the hospital? (<i>Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No</i>) • Before your child left the hospital, did a provider or hospital pharmacist explain in a way that was easy to understand about possible side effects of new medicines? (<i>Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No</i>)
<p>Preventing Mistakes and Helping You Report Concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before giving your child any medicine, how often did providers or other hospital staff check your child’s wristband or confirm his or her identity in some other way? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>) • Mistakes in your child’s health care can include things like giving the wrong medicine or doing the wrong surgery. During this hospital stay, did providers or other hospital staff tell you how to report if you had any concerns about mistakes in your child’s health care? (<i>Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No</i>)

Survey Source: [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](https://www.aHRQ.gov)

Appendix C: CAHPS Outpatient and Ambulatory Surgery Survey

<p>About Facilities and Staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the check-in process run smoothly? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Was the facility clean? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Were clerks and receptionists at the facility as helpful as they should be? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Did the clerks and receptionists at the facility treat you with courtesy and respect? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Did the doctors and nurses treat you with courtesy and respect? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Did the doctors and nurses make sure you were as comfortable as possible? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No)
<p>Communications About Your Procedure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before your procedure, did your doctor or anyone from the facility give you all the information you needed about your procedure? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Before your procedure, did your doctor or anyone from the facility give you easy to understand instructions about getting ready for your procedure? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Did the doctors and nurses explain your procedure in a way that was easy to understand? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Anesthesia is something that would make you feel sleepy or go to sleep during your procedure. Were you given anesthesia? (Yes/ No) • Did your doctor or anyone from the facility explain the process of giving anesthesia in a way that was easy to understand? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Did your doctor or anyone from the facility explain the possible side effects of the anesthesia in a way that was easy to understand? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No)
<p>Overall Rating of Facility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst facility possible and 10 is the best facility possible, what number would you use to rate this facility?
<p>Patient's Willingness to Recommend HOPD or ASC to Family or Friends</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you recommend this facility to your friends and family? (Definitely no/ Probably no/ Probably yes/ Definitely yes)

Survey Source: [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#)

References

¹ Isaac T, Zaslavsky A, Cleary P, Landon B. [The relationship between patients' perception of care and measures of hospital quality and safety](#). HSR. 2010;45(4):1024-1040.

² Kennedy G, Tevis S, Kent K. [Is there a relationship between patient satisfaction and favorable outcomes?](#) Ann Surg. 2014;260(4):592-600.

³ [Medication Errors Injure 1.5 Million People and Cost Billions of Dollars Annually; Report Offers Comprehensive Strategies for Reducing Drug-Related Mistakes](#). Accessed June 14, 2021.