National Patient Choice Survey, Wave 6

Contributed by Ipsos MORI
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21st August 2007: Since the beginning of 2006, patients have been entitled to a choice of four or more hospitals when referred by their GP. The Department of Health commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake a regular postal survey assessing the implementation of this policy. The results of the first six surveys indicate that most eligible patients are not receiving any choice of hospital provider, despite government exhortations â€" although the proportion being offered a choice has improved with each wave of research, from 30% in May/June 2006 to 48% in March 2007.

The results of each wave relate to a two-week referral window:
- Results for the first wave relate to referrals made in May / June 2006 (78,777 responses).
- Results for the second wave relate to referrals made in July 2006 (70,084 responses).
- Results for the third wave relate to referrals made in September 2006 (70,580 responses).
- Results for the fourth wave relate to referrals made in November 2006 (56,928 responses).
- Results for the fifth wave relate to referrals made in January 2007 (73,000 responses).
- Results for the sixth wave relate to referrals made in March 2007 (75,290 responses). The March 2007 survey obtained a response rate of 30%.

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The main findings of the March survey are:
- More patients recalled being offered a choice of hospital for their first outpatient appointment: 48% compared with 45% in the January survey.
- Slightly more patients were aware before they visited their GP that they had a choice of hospitals for their first appointment: 37% compared with 36% in January.
- 66% of patients who were aware of choice recalled being offered choice, whereas 38% of those not aware of choice recalled being offered it, compared with 64% and 34% respectively in the January survey.
- 36% of patients who were offered a choice of hospital were also offered a copy of the 'Choosing your hospital' booklet, compared with 32% in the January survey.
- 78% of patients who were offered choice were satisfied with the process and 5% were dissatisfied, similar to the January survey.
- Location or transport considerations were again given most often, by 66% of patients, as an important factor when choosing a hospital.

Topline Results
- Results for Wave 1 based on 78,777 respondents.
- Results for Wave 2 based on 70,084 respondents.
- Results for Wave 3 based on 70,580 respondents.
- Results for Wave 4 based on 56,928 respondents.
- Results for Wave 5 based on 73,000 respondents.
- Results for Wave 6 based on 75,290 respondents.
- Fieldwork carried out by postal questionnaire among patients referred in the last two weeks of May 2006 for Wave 1, the last two weeks of July 2006 for Wave 2, the last two weeks of September 2006 for Wave 3, the last two weeks of November 2006 for Wave 4, the last two weeks of January 2007 for Wave 5 and the last two weeks of March 2007 for Wave 6.
- Where results do not sum to 100%, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple responses, or to the exclusion of don't knows or non-responses.
- An asterisk (*) indicates a finding of less than 0.5%, but greater than zero.
- Results are weighted by age within gender to the profile of those with a first outpatient appointment.
- Base: All unless otherwise stated. Q1 Before you visited your GP, did you know that you now have a choice of hospitals that you can go to for your first hospital appointment? Â Wave 1Wave 2Wave 3Wave 4Wave 5Wave 6Â %%%%%%Yes293232353637No696767646362Not stated111111Q2 Were you offered a choice of hospital for your first hospital appointment?Â Wave 1Wave 2Wave 3Wave 4Wave 5Wave 6Â %%%%%%Yes303538414548No645957535047Don't know444444Not stated222222Q3 Were you offered a copy of

the Choosing Your Hospital booklet by your GP Practice?Base: All who were offered a choice of hospitalÂ Wave 1Wave 2Wave 3Wave 4Wave 5Wave 6Base(23,344)(24,395)(26,472)(23,549)(32,788)(36,035)Â %%%%%%Yes202627283236No706462625853Don't know444455Not stated666666Q4 Which of the following best describes how you felt about the process of choosing your hospital?Base: All who were offered a choice of hospitalÂ Wave 1Wave 2Wave 3Wave 4Wave 5Wave 6Base(23,344)(24,492)(26,472)(23,549)(32,788)(36,035)Â %%%%%%Very satisfied484851515252Fairly satisfied272727262726Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied151513131313Fairly dissatisfied333223Very dissatisfied332323Not stated444444Q5 Which three factors, if any, would be most important to you when choosing a hospital?

Top 9 factorsÂ Wave 1Wave 2Wave 3Wave 4Wave 5Wave 6Â %%%%%%Location / Transport (accessibility / easy to get to)576866596466Waiting times222522192121Reputation of hospital (previous experience / familiarity / confidence)182221182020Cleanliness (infection free / hygiene / MRSA levels)152018151819Quality of care (treatment / standards / expertise)171919161716Quality of staff (friendliness / competence / kindness)898788Car parking (free / cheaper / easier)687677Reputation of consultant (specialisms)556456Appointment time / flexibility / suitable time / seen on time346355Don't know1*****Not stated271517272018Q6 Do you have any comments about your experience of arranging a hospital appointment?

Top 8 factorsÂ Wave 1Wave 2Wave 3Wave 4Wave 5Wave 6Â %%%%%%Pleased / satisfied / excellent / good891010910Efficient / straightforward567677Quick / quick appointment / seen quicker than expected454454Takes too long for appointments to come through566556Waiting time / waiting list too long / delays554343Staff pleasant / helpful / friendly / polite333333Good GP / GP arranged appointment / happy to leave it to GP233333Difficulty with phoning / amount of time to get through / line always busy233233No comment141715131515Not stated443436443838