
Announcement of methodological changes

Provisional Monthly Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) in England – April 2011 to March 2012 and April 2012 to July 2012

The PROMs data due to be published on 11 December 2012 is being produced differently from previous editions in two respects:

1. A formal split into two separate statistical publications, one for each financial year of coverage;
2. Changes in the collection and processing of the underlying data.

Split into two publications

Provisional monthly PROMs publications contain data which covers two financial years: a full year's coverage (e.g., 2011-12, in publications from August 2012 to July 2013) and a cumulative coverage of the following year (e.g., starting with April 2012 coverage in the September 2012 publication, increasing to April 2012–March 2013 coverage in the August 2013 publication). Summary statistics and underlying data are made available through a separate web page for each of the financial years.

Announcements of the statistics' publication as official statistics have until now identified a single monthly publication of provisional PROMs statistics but with (where applicable) two years' of coverage. To better clarify the relationship between the years of coverage and the web pages on which the statistics are published, provisional PROMs publications for each year of coverage will now be regarded and announced as separate official statistics.

This change affects only the formal treatment of the publications as publicly announced; there is no change to what is being made available.

Changes to collection and processing

PROMs data is derived from pre-operative questionnaires issued by English providers of NHS healthcare to patients undergoing four common surgical procedures (groin hernia, hip replacement, knee replacement and varicose vein surgeries), and post-operative questionnaires subsequently sent to the patients.

Until the end of September 2012, completed questionnaires and any updates were submitted to a central contractor organisation where they were scanned, the responses

recorded in a database and processed for analysis by the Health and Social Care Information Centre ('HSCIC').

From October 2012, completed questionnaires and any updates have been submitted to one of four accredited supplier organisations who scan the questionnaires and submit them electronically into the HSCIC's new internal 'Clearing House' data processing and warehousing solution, where the data is processed and analysed for publication. Further information is available from the Department of Health at <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/07/proms-collection-reporting/>.

The change to the questionnaire processing arrangements has resulted in some small differences between the new and old systems in high-level counts of questionnaires and, in a small number of cases, in calculated health scores. There are consequent small changes in some derived statistics.

Extensive exploratory analysis was conducted by the HSCIC to determine the estimated extent of the differences between the two systems as part of its acceptance into service. Systemic differences are small – for instance, the estimated difference in the number of questionnaires for the latest full year of data was approximately 1 in 1500 (less than 7 hundredths of a percentage point) and other differences were of similar order.

It is not thought likely this will impact on the validity of comparing statistics produced in future against earlier figures; however, statistics published from December 2012 will be suitably annotated so that users are aware when interpreting figures.