

1.5 MDS 3.0

In response to changes in nursing home care, resident characteristics, advances in resident assessment methods, and provider and consumer concerns about the performance of the MDS 2.0, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) contracted with the RAND Corporation and Harvard University to draft revisions and nationally test the MDS Version 3.0. Following is a synopsis of the goals and key findings as reported in the *Development & Validation of a Revised Nursing Home Assessment Tool: MDS 3.0* final report (Saliba and Buchanan, 2008; *available at <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/NursingHomeQualityInits/downloads/MDS30FinalReport.pdf>*).

Goals

The goals of the MDS 3.0 revision *were* to introduce advances in assessment measures, increase the clinical relevance of *data elements*, improve the accuracy and validity of the *assessment instrument*, increase user satisfaction, and increase the resident's voice by introducing more resident interview items. Providers, consumers, and other technical experts in nursing home care requested that MDS 3.0 revisions focus on improving the *instrument's* clinical utility, clarity, and accuracy. CMS also wanted to increase the usability of the instrument while maintaining the ability to use MDS data for quality measure reporting and Medicare SNF PPS reimbursement (via Patient Driven Payment Model [PDPM] classification).

In addition to improving the content and structure of the MDS, the RAND/Harvard team also aimed to improve user satisfaction. User attitudes are key determinants of quality improvement implementation. Negative user attitudes toward the MDS are often cited as a reason that nursing homes have not fully implemented the information from the MDS into targeted care planning.

Methods

To address many of the issues and challenges previously identified and to provide an empirical foundation for examining revisions to the MDS before they were implemented, the RAND/Harvard team engaged in a careful iterative process that incorporated provider and consumer input, expert consultation, scientific advances in clinical knowledge about screening and assessment, CMS experience, and intensive item development and testing by a national Veterans Health Administration (VHA) consortium. This process allowed the final national testing of MDS 3.0 to include well-developed and tested items.

The national validation and evaluation of the MDS 3.0 included 71 community nursing homes (3,822 residents) and 19 VHA nursing homes (764 residents), regionally distributed throughout the United States. The evaluation was designed to test and analyze inter-rater agreement (reliability) between gold-standard (research) nurses and between nursing home and gold-standard nurses, validity of key sections, response rates for interview items, anonymous feedback on changes from participating nurses, and time to complete the MDS assessment. In addition, the national test design allowed comparison of item distributions between MDS 3.0 and MDS 2.0 and thus facilitated mapping into payment cells (Saliba and Buchanan, 2008).

Key Findings for MDS 3.0

- Improved Resident Input
- Improved Accuracy and Reliability
- Increased Efficiency
- Improved Staff Satisfaction and Perception of Clinical Utility

Improvements incorporated in MDS 3.0 produce a more efficient assessment instrument: better quality information was obtained in less time. Such gains should improve identification of resident needs and enhance resident-focused care planning. In addition, inclusion of items recognized in other care settings is likely to enhance communication among providers. These significant gains reflect the cumulative effect of changes across the tool, including:

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- use of more valid items,
- direct inclusion of resident reports, and
- improved clarity of retained items.