



**cambridge**<sup>™</sup>  
**SOUND MANAGEMENT**

**Improving a Hospital's Bottom Line  
By Improving Patient Comfort &  
Satisfaction**

## Treating the Whole Patient

Disturbing noise and lack of acoustic privacy are typical concerns of traditional hospital environments. Noises from medical equipment and conversations can disturb a patient's ability to rest. Additionally, overheard conversations can cause patients to become uncomfortable discussing sensitive issues with their doctors and family members.

The mission of many modern hospitals has expanded to not only include rehabilitation of a patient's body, but also to rejuvenate their mind and spirit. As patient satisfaction and quality of care becomes a greater focus, hospitals are seeking ways to increase acoustic comfort and privacy.

## Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) - Rating Patient Satisfaction

As mandated by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), has launched an initiative, known as the Value Based Purchasing (VBP) program, to reward hospitals for the quality of care they provide to Medicare and Medicaid patients. The VBP program, administered by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), reimburses hospitals across the country for inpatient acute care services based on quality of care, in addition to the quantity of services provided. CMS will measure hospital performance using two metrics: 1) clinical process of care and 2) patient experience. Patient experience is defined by the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey.

VBP seeks to reward hospitals for improving the quality of care provided to patients. A low HCAHPS/patient satisfaction score translates to a lower overall VBP score, which will equate to a lower Medicare reimbursement for a hospital. The HCAHPS survey measures a patient's perception of care on 10 dimensions, including the quietness of the hospital environment. Hospitals need to obtain at least a 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in each dimension to receive achievement points for full Medicare funding.

Nationally the HCAHPS measure for "Quiet at Night" reveals that patients are marginally satisfied with the hospital noise near their rooms at night. Excessive noise and the resulting lack of sleep top the list of patient complaints. When surveyed upon discharge, patients express their dissatisfaction with low ratings on questions about "Quiet at Night," "Likelihood to Recommend," and "Hospital Overall."

### The HCAHPS survey up close:

- The survey covers 10 dimensions of patient care over a series of 27 questions.
- The results of the HCAHPS survey are reported and available for public review, allowing patients to compare facility ratings side-by-side.
- Medicare reimbursement funding is now based on a pay-for-performance system

## Sample HCAHPS Survey (10 of 27 Questions)

Below is a sample of HCAHPS survey results of three randomly selected hospitals from the greater Boston metropolitan area. Note that the lowest performing area on the survey is the “Quiet at night” category.

<b>PATIENT SURVEY QUESTIONS</b>	<b>HOSPITAL 1</b>	<b>HOSPITAL 2</b>	<b>HOSPITAL 3</b>
Patients who reported that their nurses “always” communicated well.	80%	78%	80%
Patients who reported that their doctors “always” communicated well.	82%	80%	84%
Patients who reported that they “always” received help as soon as they wanted.	67%	63%	63%
Patients who reported that their pain was “always” well controlled.	75%	74%	70%
Patients who reported that staff “always” explained about medicines before giving it to them.	67%	65%	65%
Patients who reported that their room and bathroom were “always” clean.	78%	68%	71%
Patients who reported that the area around their room was “always” quiet at night.	56%	47%	52%
Patients at each hospital who reported that YES, they were given information about what to do during their recovery at home.	88%	88%	88%
Patients who gave their hospital a rating of 9 or 10 on a scale from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest).	78%	67%	75%
Patients who reported YES, they would definitely recommend the hospital.	80%	72%	81%

## Sample Patient Survey Results Details

Below is an in depth look at the “quiet at night” category of questions using the same three hospitals from the sample results above. The chart also includes the average state hospital ranking (in this example Massachusetts) and the national average for these questions.

	Patients who reported that the area around their room was “always” quiet at night.	Percent of patients who reported that the area around their room was “usually” quiet at night.	Percent of patients who reported that the area around their room was “sometimes” or “never” quiet at night.
<b>HOSPITAL 1</b>	56%	28%	16%
<b>HOSPITAL 2</b>	47%	34%	19%
<b>HOSPITAL 3</b>	52%	32%	16%
<b>STATE AVERAGE</b>	52%	33%	15%
<b>NATIONAL AVERAGE</b>	60%	30%	10%

Survey results are publicly available at: [www.medicare.gov/hospitalcare](http://www.medicare.gov/hospitalcare)

(Sample based on 3 randomly selected hospitals in the Boston metropolitan area on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013)

### Patient Satisfaction and Medicare Funding are on the line.

- Medicare payments will reflect a hospital’s VBP score (the hospital’s achievement, improvement and consistency in clinical process of care and HCAHPS survey results). A facility’s weighted score will be based on both patient survey results (30%) and other clinical measures (70%).
- Performance reimbursements in 2013 will total 1% of Medicare funding, and increase to 2% by 2017.
- Patient satisfaction scores must exceed the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in each category for a hospital to receive achievement points, and therefore a full share of funding.
- Funds that a low-scoring hospital does not receive will be reallocated to higher-ranking hospitals.

# Healing a Patient's Mind, Body and Spirit By Building a Better Acoustic Environment

There are many ways a hospital can improve their acoustic environment.

## **Give each patient their own individual room.**

This option significantly increases construction costs and, in previously existing hospitals, reduces patient capacity resulting in reduced funding.

## **Add barriers and other sound blocking materials in public spaces.**

This option increases construction costs and creates a less inviting space with less natural light and airflow, resulting in decreased comfort for patients and visitors.

## **Add sound masking.**

This option is easily integrated into existing spaces, allows hospitals to keep spaces open for more natural daylight and airflow, and increases the ability for hospitals to use an inpatient room to house more than one patient.

The simplest and most effective sound masking system designed for hospital environments is the Qt Quiet Technology sound masking system. The Qt system provides continuous background sound, is designed to fit into any space and covers unwanted hospital noises and conversations. Making the resulting environment feel more private and comfortable.

## Further Reading

To learn more about the provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act or how sound masking can improve your hospital's acoustic environment, visit or download the following:

**Sound Masking in Healthcare Brochure** (download available on the Healthcare Industry webpage at [www.csmqt.com/industries-page/healthcare](http://www.csmqt.com/industries-page/healthcare))

[www.hcahpsonline.org](http://www.hcahpsonline.org)

[www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov](http://www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov)

[www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)

