

Quality

focus

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Helping You Achieve Your Quality Goals

Hello, and thank you for reading our Spring 2007 Newsletter.

As we commence a new fiscal year in Canadian healthcare, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our customers who have helped make this yet another successful year for Agili-T. You have allowed us to partner with your organization in an important and meaningful way. We are extremely proud to work with care providers and regional health boards from coast to coast helping them achieve the ultimate goal of improved patient care.

Patient satisfaction measurement has become an indispensable metric. Healthcare organizations have committed to customer satisfaction and Continuous Quality Improvement in ever-increasing numbers. One can learn a lot by listening. Through our services and solutions, we allow our customers to discover what aspects of their care delivery are meeting patient needs and what areas require improvement by listening to their patients and their employees. A well-designed feedback survey can help improve operational performance and ultimately, the quality of patient care. The key is making it continuous, keeping it simple and acting on what you learn.

Improving the quality of care is an ongoing challenge for any healthcare organization. Agili-T is ready for the challenge. We are committed to helping our clients and the healthcare community in any way that promotes clinical and service excellence.

We realize that patient-centered care means more than just satisfied patients. To achieve healthcare quality improvement requires the dedication of both staff and physicians. To this end Agili-T now offers solutions to measure organizational work climate and correlating those metrics to patient satisfaction.

We also understand that areas such as patient safety are of critical importance. Agili-T has responded by offering patient safety solutions to assess the safety culture of a hospital as a whole, or for specific units within hospitals, as well as to track changes in patient safety over time and evaluate the impact of safety-related interventions.

We look forward to working with your organization in the future!

Sincerely,

Richard Pridham
President



Provincial Health Services Authority Partners with Agili-T to Measure Patient Safety in British Columbia



Province-wide solutions.
Better health.

Improving quality and safety is central to the goal of achieving better healthcare. As part of its commitment to patients to provide optimal care without harm, the **BC Provincial Health Service Authority (PHSA)** is conducting a Health Authority survey on the perceptions, advice and evaluation of the Patient Safety Culture. Safety culture surveys are used to measure organizational attitudes, behaviours, processes and decisions that can lead to patient harm in healthcare organizations. The PHSA objectives are to:

- Understand the current status of organizational culture as it reflects on patient safety
- Evaluate efforts intended to raise awareness about patient safety issues
- Evaluate patient safety interventions or programs
- Track improvements over time

PHSA has chosen Agili-T Health Solutions as its partner to manage and administer the patient safety culture survey. The survey, launched in March 2007, targets all employees of PHSA as well as its Agencies including the BC Children's Hospital and Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children, BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre, BC Renal Agency, PHSA Cardiac Services, BC Transplant Society, BC Centre for Disease Control and BC Cancer Agency.

To ensure maximum participation, employees can respond by paper or online via the Web. This important patient safety survey is one of the largest studies of its kind in North America.

PHSA is one of six BC health authorities; the other five health authorities serve various geographic regions. PHSA's primary role is to ensure that BC residents have access to a coordinated network of high-quality specialized health care services.

PHSA operates provincial agencies including BC Children's Hospital and the BC Transplant Society, but PHSA is also responsible for specialized provincial health services like trauma and chest surgery, which are delivered in a number of locations across the province.

By planning, coordinating and evaluating specialized health services, PHSA is working with the other health authorities across BC to provide equitable and cost-effective healthcare for people who need provincial services such as cancer treatment, management of a complex mental health problem or cardiac care.

A key part of PHSA's role is to find operational efficiencies so that those savings can be redirected into patient care. This will be achieved by consolidating and streamlining corporate services and reducing the cost of support services through alternative models, such as sharing services with other health authorities or outsourcing some services.

For more information on conducting a patient safety culture survey for your organization, please call **1-866-341-7796**.

Agili-T Welcomes Aboard New Customers

Agili-T is pleased to announce the signing of several new customers. We welcome the following healthcare organizations that have chosen Agili-T to help measure and improve the quality of care:

- ▶ **British Columbia Centre for Disease Control** (www.bccdc.org), Vancouver, British Columbia
- ▶ **British Columbia Provincial Health Services Authority** (www.phsa.ca), Vancouver, British Columbia
- ▶ **Capital District Health Authority** (www.cdha.nshealth.ca), Halifax, Nova Scotia
- ▶ **Cape Breton District Health Authority** (www.cbdha.nshealth.ca), Sydney, Nova Scotia
- ▶ **Cavendish Community Health and Social Services Authority** (www.santemontreal.qc.ca/csss/cavendish), Montreal, Quebec
- ▶ **Central West Health Corporation** (www.cwhc.nf.ca), Grand Falls-Windsor, Newfoundland
- ▶ **Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority** (www.gasha.nshealth.ca), Antigonish, Nova Scotia
- ▶ **La Beauce Community Health and Social Services Authority**, Beauceville, Quebec
- ▶ **Laval Community Health and Social Services Authority** (www.cssslaval.qc.ca), Laval, Quebec
- ▶ **Operational Stress Injury Social Support - OSISS** (www.osiss.ca), Ottawa, Ontario
- ▶ **Pictou Country District Health Authority** (www.pcha.nshealth.ca), New Glasgow, Nova Scotia
- ▶ **South West Nova District Health Authority** (www.swndha.nshealth.ca), Kentville, Nova Scotia
- ▶ **Summit Community Health and Social Services Authority** (www.csss-sommets.com), Sainte-Agathe, Quebec

Androfact Version 5.0 Has Arrived!



Agili-T is pleased to announce the launch of **Androfact Version 5.0**. Based largely on feedback from our customers, Androfact V. 5.0 includes a multitude of new features and system enhancements.

Some key highlights to Androfact Version 5.0 include:



New look and feel

A completely redesigned, more intuitive User Interface with a streamlined survey design workflow.



Improved survey authoring

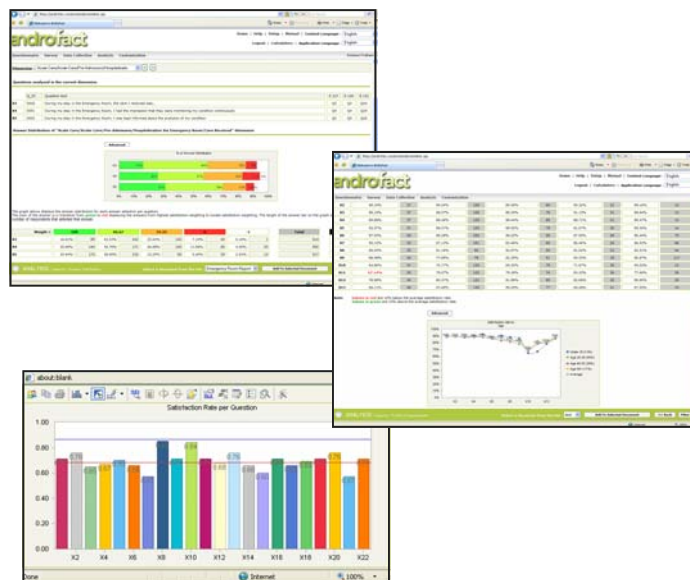
Designing and deploying questionnaires is now easier than ever.



Improved analytics

Several new reporting capabilities have now been introduced including:

- **Segmentation Analysis:** Analyze survey results by socio-demographic or any other segmentation criteria at the click of a button
- **Filtering Engine:** Filter results socio-demographic or any other criteria to drill down and better understand your survey data
- **Dynamic, Customizable Graphs:** All charts and graphs are now fully customizable allowing you complete control the look of your presentation



Androfact: *The Tool of Choice for Healthcare Quality Improvement*

Androfact™ is a powerful, Web-based and fully hosted healthcare surveying application. It enables hospitals, clinics, continuing care facilities and regional health authorities to collect, analyze, benchmark, and report patient satisfaction levels in a cost-effective and continuous manner. Androfact allows care providers to **LISTEN** their patients, to **LEARN** from their experiences and to **IMPROVE** the quality of care.

For a personalized demonstration of Androfact V.5.0 give us a call at 1-866-341-7796.

Androfact Benefits:

- Design and deploy surveys quickly and easily
- Measure and track key indicators that drive patient satisfaction
- Streamline your feedback processes
- Deliver patient feedback information quickly to management and front-line staff within your organization
- React more efficiently to patient satisfaction issues and complaints
- Benchmark your performance
- Reduce your survey costs
- Improve the quality of care and organizational performance

Linking Employee Psychological Climate to Patient Satisfaction

A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE STRATEGY FOR HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS



Research shows that a positive psychological climate has a direct impact on job satisfaction and commitment and can motivate employees to perform at high levels and lead to higher retention rates. Working in a positive climate, employees experience their jobs, roles, leadership, work teams and organizations in a positive manner. Concretely, the psychological climate strategy is a **Balanced Scorecard** composed of 15 key indicators of management practices.

Agili-T has partnered with the **Group for Research on Impacts of Organization among Patients (GRIOP)**, lead by Dr.

Serge Gagnon, PhD. GRIOP is part of the **Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre**. Dr. Gagnon is a renowned expert and thought leader in the field of strategic change management in Quebec and Canada.

Through years of research, Dr. Gagnon has developed a comprehensive and **scientifically validated** assessment tool that has been used by healthcare organizations representing more than 60,000 employees. What's more, a benchmarking database has been developed to allow hospitals and health boards to compare results.

CLIMATE STRATEGY

Metrics to improve employee psychological climate

- **JOB:** Know the importance of their work's contribution; benefit of an autonomy level corresponding to their responsibilities; work to their full potential and tackle interesting challenges.
- **ROLE:** Evolve in a role structure in which responsibilities, objectives and who is in charge are clear; work in a conflict-free environment (rules, who decide what, etc.); experience a realistic workload.
- **LEADERSHIP:** Trust their supervisor; are regularly informed about work objectives; know that they can rely on their supervisor to facilitate their work.
- **WORK TEAM:** Evolve in a work team characterized by warmth; feel proud to be assigned to their work team; experience a high level of cooperation.
- **ORGANIZATION:** Know they are supported when trying to innovate; feel that the organization treats them right regarding decisions taken about their functions; know that the organization moves forward to improve the quality of their work environment.

The impact of psychological climate on patients



In partnership with GRIOP, Agili-T offers a full suite of services and expertise to support the successful implementation of the "climate strategy" assessment program. This includes survey administration, questionnaire distribution, data collection (Web

and/or paper), statistical analysis as well as executive and departmental reporting. Furthermore, Dr. Gagnon offers consulting expertise to organizations seeking to implement work climate improvement initiatives.

MUHC: Quality in Action Equals Improved Patient Care

ABOUT THE MUHC

Located in Montreal, Quebec, the **McGill University Health Centre (MUHC)** is one of the most comprehensive academic health centres in North America. The MUHC's multidisciplinary teams provide care to adults and children in the Montreal region and to patients from across Quebec through seven clinical missions: Pediatric Medicine (The Montreal Children's Hospital), Medicine, Surgery, Neurosciences, Women's Health, Mental Health and Cancer Care.

The Research Institute of the MUHC is an internationally recognized biomedical and healthcare research centre supporting over 500 researchers as well as 1,000 graduate and post-doctoral students. It operates more than 300 laboratories devoted to a broad spectrum of fundamental and clinical research. In addition, the MUHC prides itself on the quality and rigour of its clinical and scientific training. Each year, close to 3,000 people train at the MUHC, including 825 medical and surgical residents, 1,075 nurses, 450 medical students and 525 health students.

"We survey our patients, analyse their replies, and then begin our quality improvement process. The next time we survey patients, we expect to see, and we do see, improved results. That's quality in action."

- Linda Maruska
MUHC Quality Advisor

THE QUALITY MISSION

The MUHC quality team includes a director of quality, a quality manager for adult patients and one for pediatrics, quality advisors for each MUHC clinical mission, two risk advisors and two administrative technicians. The quality advisors work with patient quality teams in each mission to establish and evaluate patient quality standards.

"To obtain patient feedback so that satisfaction can be evaluated, the MUHC uses the **Androfact™ Healthcare Survey System**, from Agili-T Health Solutions", said Linda Maruska, MUHC Quality Advisor. Surveys of the major mission teams at the MUHC are conducted every two years. This gives the team time to analyze the results and brainstorm and implement change before the changes are assessed. It also leads to a program and culture of continuous improvement. "The surveys enable us to take the pulse of quality throughout the hospital. Then we focus on implementing the right improvements for the right reasons," said Ms. Maruska.

Patients at the hospital, or their family members, complete surveys concerning specific aspects of their treatment. In addition, statistically significant samples of discharged patients receive survey phone calls from managers or associate directors. The surveys cover issues such as overall satisfaction with treatment, pain control, doctor availability and other quality issues.

"We survey our patients, analyze their replies and then begin our quality improvement process. But there is no point in taking action if you are not going to measure the impact of your actions. The next time we survey patients, we measure the results of our actions. We expect to see, and we do see, improved results. That's quality in action," said Ms. Maruska.

"The survey results serve as a catalyst for brainstorming ideas that facilitate change and improve quality. Without the surveys, we'd be guessing," she added.

SURVEY VALIDATION

Maruska finds that the Androfact validated question banks cover "the vast majority of the MUHC survey areas." All the questions in the survey have been validated for the healthcare industry and can easily be customized for each mission, service area or team. In addition, new questions can be added to the survey to cover issues specific to MUHC and the province of Quebec. For instance, MUHC asks questions to determine if patients were able to receive healthcare in the language of their choice.

"The survey questions are very good, yet there is still a great deal of flexibility, which means we don't have to reinvent the wheel. Instead, we can add custom questions to our surveys as needed," said Ms. Maruska.

Survey replies are entered into the Androfact database. Results are analyzed by the Quality Department and then shared with quality teams in the appropriate mission area. The Mission team takes the results and any recommendations to the Quality Committee. Together, all those responsible for quality improvements work out solutions to problems that need to be addressed. "We survey aspects where we think we can make a difference, and once the survey results are in, we work as a team to implement appropriate changes," said Ms. Maruska.

BEYOND PATIENTS

Patient satisfaction is an important part of what the MUHC is all about. However, the MUHC approach to quality also includes staff, interns and other departments because the quality of the services that healthcare professionals receive from various departments within the institution has a bearing on retention, morale and, ultimately, on the quality of patient care. For instance, if nurses and doctors receive medication from the pharmacy in a timely and accurate manner, patient care improves as a consequence. With that in mind, MUHC surveys healthcare professionals to see if delivery of medications and other services is adequate.

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McGill University Health Centre

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“As a teaching hospital, we know that our residents are the future of healthcare and that they have an impact on the day-to-day quality of care that patients receive,” said Ms. Maruska. That is why MUHC surveys residents to get their feedback on orientation programs, working conditions, meal plans, sleeping quarters and even parking. Based on the results of the last survey, MUHC made changes to the quality and flexibility of its resident meal plan.

FROM SURVEY TO RESULTS

Change often occurs slowly at large institutions and budgets can be an issue in the healthcare system. MUHC cannot and does not make changes on a whim. Instead, the survey results are treated seriously and are used as the catalyst for changes – large and small. For example, after a survey indicated that most patients found the

physical appearance of the Dialysis Unit less than bright and cheerful, the physical environment was renovated and upgraded. When a survey indicated that patients were having difficulty finding the Urology Clinic, MUHC improved its signage in the area to better indicate where personnel were located. “When you work at a hospital, you know how to get around. Sometimes it takes a survey to remind you that your patients are not as familiar with the surroundings as the workers are. You need to know that a problem exists before you can fix it, and the survey results pointed us in the right direction,” said Ms. Maruska.

Fixing problems “is not always a question of dollars,” Ms. Maruska added. For instance, the surveys help the MUHC Housekeeping department pinpoint specific areas of the hospital that require greater concentration. Solutions often involve reallocating staff and resources rather than adding additional staff.

MUHC has been conducting surveys for over six years and working closely with Agili-T to improve the feedback process. “We are a pretty picky bunch and Agili-T has always been open to our suggestions,” Ms. Maruska said.

As MUHC continues to survey, the health centre is building quality benchmarks in the various missions and departments. This gives staff targets to strive for and to improve upon. In addition, since other hospitals in Quebec are using Androfact, Ms. Maruska envisions a day when there will be healthcare system quality benchmarks across users. “This will enable the healthcare system to better serve patients and their families, as well as staff and other stakeholders,” she said.

Introducing the Androfact Kiosk Survey System



Agili-T is proud to announce the launch of our Kiosk Survey System. Feedback at the point-of-care has never been easier, faster and more reliable. For surveys requiring continuous, un-staffed, interactive survey data collection, Agili-T’s Kiosk Survey System allows care providers to easily gather stakeholder feedback and analyse results in real time. Kiosk surveying can work on a stand-alone basis or can offer an optional data collection capability with other ongoing survey projects.

Kiosk surveying is ideal for:

- Patient satisfaction surveys
- Medical staff surveys
- Anonymous employee surveys
- Clinical research projects

Kiosk survey participation is quick and convenient. Respondents simply complete the survey and data is automatically captured in **Androfact™**, Agili-T’s powerful surveying application. Results from one or multiple kiosks can be analyzed using Androfact’s powerful reporting capabilities.

Key features:

- Sleek, modern and inviting design including PC and touch screen display
- Unlimited number of questions, complete with branching and skip-patterns
- Multiple choice, open-ended questions
- Completely personalized and custom-branded for your organization
- Easily modified - new or revised questions can be uploaded anytime at the click of a button

To get you up and running quickly, Agili-T is offering a **Quick Start** kiosk package including hardware, installation and set up of your first kiosk survey!

For more information, contact us at 1-866-341-7796.

Patient Satisfaction: One Goal, Different Approaches

by *Richard Pridham*



Many healthcare organizations currently collect patient feedback for accreditation and quality assurance purposes. The measurement of patient satisfaction is becoming less a luxury and more a necessity for healthcare providers.

It is increasingly important that patient satisfaction programs be implemented using sound methodology, tools and processes that facilitate benchmarking and allow data to be used in the decision-making process.

THE YARDSTICK

Patient-centered outcomes have become a primary means of measuring the effectiveness of healthcare delivery. Patient reports of their health and quality of life, and their healthcare experience, are as important as many clinical health measures. Ultimately, action based on patient feedback translates into improved operational performance, quality of care and more satisfied patients.

Feedback provides critical information on patient expectations and how patients perceive the quality of care, which may differ from how organizations perceive it. In other words, listening to patients, and other stakeholders in the care delivery ecosystem, is a positive management practice that can influence the quality improvement agenda and provides an opportunity for organizational learning and development.

Healthcare systems today are dynamic, integrated entities that must adapt to diverse and changing health needs and empower patients to be active participants in decisions relating to their health. Growing evidence links patient feedback and participation in decision-making to improvements in health outcomes.

Effective patient feedback strategies can:

- Lead to more accessible and effective health services
- Encourage participation by patients in the improvement of care delivery design
- Make organizations more aware of areas of dissatisfaction and satisfaction
- Provide staff with insights into how patients perceive their care

- Improve patient confidence in the healthcare system

It is not possible for healthcare providers to determine the “root causes” of service delivery problems without access to information on patient satisfaction, expectations and outcomes. Understanding patient healthcare perceptions plays an important role in determining how to improve the quality of healthcare delivery and operations. When operations are aligned with patient expectations and needs, resources are better managed. This helps healthcare providers improve efficiency and quality and cut costs.

Since you cannot manage what you have not measured, reliable patient feedback is necessary for decision-making at all levels. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is therefore tied directly to the measurement and monitoring of patient feedback. By focusing on the full scope of service delivery in all parts of the organization, healthcare providers can enhance the effectiveness of quality initiatives.

Implementing an effective patient feedback program is easier said than done. Important decisions must be made. What instruments and tools should you use? Do you do it in-house or outsource it? How frequently do you survey? How do you interpret satisfaction findings? These questions reflect concerns that many healthcare providers have about measuring patient satisfaction.

SURVEYING FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Patient surveying can occur at different levels within a health system: department of health, regional health board, care facility, service area, department or unit at a point of service location. The objectives for information gathered at different levels can vary considerably. This is especially the case for large “populational” surveys that evaluate health services for an entire province or health district. While populational surveys provide important information, particularly for system-wide accountability and strategic planning, they may not address the specific quality improvement concerns of quality managers at the facility or unit level. Sur-

veying at this lower level can significantly help improve front-line patient care and allow for a more granular assessment of key quality metrics, such as facility-specific indicators, program/service evaluations, business process effectiveness and so on.

Evidence demonstrates that a patient’s recollection of their care experience diminishes over time. For example, surveying six to twelve months after the fact may not yield reliable information. Furthermore, it might be too late to act upon issues uncovered long after the fact. However, with the proper tools and processes in place, patient feedback can be gathered close to the “moment of experience” allowing for prompt action and problem resolution.

IN-HOUSE VS. OUTSOURCE

Every healthcare provider has different surveying needs and choosing the right survey approach can be daunting. However, the right solution can guide important quality improvement initiatives.

In-house and outsourced surveying solutions each have their respective pros and cons.

Self-Managed Approach: Organizations that can confidently handle all aspects of patient satisfaction surveying can undertake this process internally. Doing this requires using appropriate questionnaire instruments, acquiring survey, data gathering and analytical tools and possessing the resources needed to manage the process.

The self-managed approach can allow organizations to survey frequently or continuously on an in-depth basis by site, department or unit. It can also shorten the cycle from survey deployment to results and can improve the delivery of survey data to front-line staff and management for effective problem resolution. This approach can also be more cost-effective than outsourcing the process to a third-party survey vendor.

Outsourced Approach: Organizations can outsource the surveying process to an external marketing research firm that handles the entire process—from questionnaire

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Patient Satisfaction: One Goal, Different Approaches

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design, sampling planning, survey administration, data collection to analysis and reporting.

There are a few key reasons for outsourcing. Many organizations do not possess the internal resources and expertise needed to manage the process or they may conduct infrequent surveys, making it more cost-effective to outsource. Organizations may want an unbiased third-party to conduct the survey and they sometimes lack the technology required to implement a sound patient-satisfaction measurement program.

Selecting the right partner is key. Marketing research is a vast field with numerous vendors. However, healthcare quality improvement is a specialized area that requires a different approach from traditional marketing research. Some firms, like Agili-T, focus on healthcare and as such, offer survey instruments and tools such as **Androfact** designed specifically for quality improvement.

SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

Questionnaire design is a complex science. Some organizations will elect to develop their own questionnaires from scratch while others will rely on using validated instruments offered by survey firms or instruments available in the public domain. For instance, Agili-T offers standardized questionnaires for in-patient, out-patient, ER, patient safety and continuing care just to name a few. Although these instruments can be used off-the-shelf, they can provide a starting point for customized instruments.

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY

Recent technological advances, including the use of innovative data-gathering technologies, solve many of the problems associated with measuring satisfaction and the effective presentations of survey results. For organizations intending to survey all or most of their patient population continuously, these technologies can be extremely cost-effective. However, more traditional survey methods may suffice for organizations wishing to gather data periodically or for a small proportion of their patient population.

Even though the Internet has become pervasive, patient surveying still relies on traditional paper-and-pencil questionnaires and, to a lesser extent, telephone interviewing.

However, there are highly effective ways to leverage electronic data collection to reduce costs, increase response rates and compress the data-gathering time-frame. Even the process of managing paper surveys can be automated through the use of scanning and Optical Mark Recognition technology.

Agili-T has successfully combined the use of different data collection techniques such as paper and Web surveys, for example. Respondents are given a paper questionnaire and pre-paid return envelope; however, a Web address and single-use passcode are indicated on the cover page, giving the respondent the option to participate online in their language of choice.

Another example includes on-site computer kiosks positioned at various point-of-care locations. Patients can complete satisfaction surveys immediately after their visits, with minimal or no direction from staff. Kiosks can be dedicated to surveying purposes or can be programmed to include other informational services such as patient education, facility staff directories and location maps.

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) is yet another cost-effective complement to paper, Web or kiosk surveying. With IVR, respondents dial a dedicated toll-free number and follow voice prompts to complete the survey using touch-tone phones or by recording comments. The system is available 24-7, so respondents can participate at their convenience, in the language of their choice.

Finally, the use of handheld devices such as iPAQs, PalmPilots or TabletPCs, can also be effective in certain situations. These devices can be used to conduct face-to-face patient interviews by staff or volunteers and are ideal for short questionnaires.

One of the key benefits of data collection technologies is that data is consolidated instantly, enabling real-time monitoring of results and eliminating the high cost and time associated with data entry and coding.

FROM DATA TO INSIGHT

There are numerous ways to process and analyze patient-satisfaction data. Statistical analysis can range from simple descriptive statistics such as counts, scores and frequency distributions of patient responses to more complex techniques such as correlation, “key driver” analysis or quality control

charting that highlight relationships and variations in the data. In addition, technologies for tabulating and analyzing survey data range from relatively simple spreadsheets to more sophisticated statistical applications. The challenge is to convert data into insight so that the organization can apply what it has learned to quality improvement initiatives.

Tools like Androfact simplify the analytical and reporting process. Easy to understand reports are available instantly and do not require significant statistical knowledge to interpret. Presentation-ready reports are generated quickly by a click of a mouse. In addition, survey results can be easily and securely shared with management and supervisory staff within the organization allowing for quicker response and action.

REPORTING & COMMUNICATING RESULTS

The critical last step in the survey process is to present findings to management or teams within the organization so that key improvement initiatives can be discussed, assessed and ultimately implemented. It is also valuable to report findings for subgroups using segmentation techniques, such as satisfaction levels for different demographic groups, by site, department, unit or program. Segmenting data allows the organization to “drill down” to root causes to quality issues.

In addition, a continuous survey approach allows organizations to compare before and after data to determine the effectiveness of program improvements or process changes.

To get the most out of the data, organizations may want to compare findings for their patients with internal benchmarks or external norms. For example, if a standardized survey that has normative information is used, it will be possible to compare facility-level data with regional or national populations.

It is also essential to communicate survey results and corresponding action plans to patients. This may be done in numerous and creative ways: through informational pamphlets, letters, posters, newsletters or Web sites. “Closing the loop” is critical to improving public confidence, demonstrating accountability and reinforcing the organization’s commitment to quality.

But it all starts with a planned, structured and dedicated approach to patient surveying.