

Understanding Measures, Star Ratings, and Quality Outcomes – October 2023 National Provider Call

October 18, 2023

Moderator: Hello everyone. Thank you for joining today's Dialysis Facility Care Compare on medicare.gov national provider call.

Our presenters today will be Golden Horton, technical lead for Dialysis Facility Care Compare on medicare.gov at CMS, and Dr. Stephanie Clark, the measures lead. Golden will begin today's presentation by covering the October 2023 release and the January 2024 release of Dialysis Facility data. Stephanie will go into more detail about the new measures for January 2024 and then discuss the standardized modalities switch ratio measure dry run.

The call will then conclude with an overview of the preview period for January 2024.

At the end of today's presentation, CMS will hold a Q&A session. Please use the Q&A box to submit your questions. Responses to questions, including those that were not answered during the webinar will be posted along with other materials from today's call on the cms.gov ESRD general information page in the coming weeks.

Now I would like to introduce Golden Horton. Golden, you may begin.

Golden Horton: Thank you, Emily.

Good afternoon and welcome to today's national provider call. I am Golden Horton, the ESRD public reporting lead. Thank you for joining us today to discuss our upcoming releases. We have a lot of valuable information to share, so let's dive in.

So, the October 2023 overview release. We wanted to start the day off with a review of what was discussed during our national provider call, which was held this past June. With the October 2023 release, the following measures on Dialysis Facility Care Compare, DFCC, are to be updated with data from calendar year 2022. I'm not going to bore you all, but as you can see, we have an extensive list. And as many of you have anticipated, we will also be updating the Star Ratings during this release. Next slide, please.

The October release will also include updates to the Star Rating methodology, which are resetting of the Star Rating distribution, domain one measures were risk-adjusted to reflect COVID-19 impact, downweight of domain three, addition of two transplant weight list measures currently reported on Care Compare. The October 2023 release reports calendar year 2022 data with calendar year 2021 as the baseline. Next slide, please.

For this reset of the Star Rating distribution, the Star Rating distribution was reset to 10% one-star, 20% two-star, 40% three-star, 20% four-star, and 10% five-star facilities. Domain one measures are risk adjusted to reflect COVID-19 impact. Risk adjustment is done at the patient

level for all domain one measures. More details can be found in the updated ESRD measures manual. These additional risk adjustments do not substantively change the measures definition. Next slide, please.

For down-weights of domain three, domain three of the Star Rating, which includes the Total KT over V and hypercalcemia measures, was down-weighted to 50% of its original weight in the overall calculation of the Star Ratings. Inclusion of transplant wait list measures. Two transplant wait list measures standardized weight listing ratio and percentage of prevalent patients waitlisted were added. Next slide, please.

Lastly, with the October 2023 refresh, the following measures on DFCC will be updated with data from the 2022 spring and 2022 fall ICH CAHPS survey. The scores and star ratings for the following survey measures include kidney doctors communication and caring composite, quality of Dialysis Center care and operations composite, providing information to patients composite, rating of kidney doctors, rating of Dialysis Center staff, rating of Dialysis Center. The overall Star rating of the ICH CAHPS survey of patients' experiences are also updated with this release. Next slide, please.

Next, we will discuss the January 2024 release overview. Next slide, please.

So, updates to quality of patient care data. With the January 2024 release, the following clinical care quality measures on Dialysis Facility Care Compare have been updated with data from April 2022 through March 2023: adult and child patients who had enough waste removed from their blood during hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis, adult patients who had too much calcium in their blood, adult patients who receive treatment through arteriovenous fistula, adult patients who had a catheter left in a vein for at least three consecutive complete months for their regular hemodialysis treatments, measurements of—excuse me—measurement of NPCR for pediatric hemodialysis patients. patients who are on the kidney or kidney, pancreas transplant waiting lists. Also, the following measures have been updated on the provider data catalog: hemoglobin management, and phosphorus concentrations in the blood.

I will now turn things over to Dr. Clark.

Stephanie Clark: Thank you so much, Golden. And now we'll move into what's new for January 2024. Next slide, please.

So, there is one new measure that will be added to DFCC for the January 2024 release. This new addition is the COVID-19 healthcare personnel vaccination measure. Next slide, please.

So, although the COVID-19 public health emergency is officially over, COVID is still in our communities, and it still poses a threat to vulnerable ESRD patients on dialysis. We believe it is critical to protect patients, caregivers, and staff and to make dialysis facilities as safe as possible for the patients they serve. This measure will assess the proportion of a dialysis facility's healthcare workforce that is vaccinated against COVID-19. Next slide, please.

Quarterly, the CDC calculates healthcare personnel COVID-19 vaccination coverage rates for each facility by taking the average of the three weekly rates submitted by the facility for that quarter. This calculation includes data from the core healthcare personnel categories of employees, licensed independent practitioners, as well as adult students, trainees, and volunteers who completed a COVID-19 vaccination course. Healthcare personnel with contraindications to COVID-19 vaccination are excluded from the denominator. Next slide, please.

Next, we'll move into the upcoming dry run of the standardized modality switch ratio for incident dialysis patients. Next slide, please.

The January 2024 preview report will include a dry run table that will preview the standardized modality switch ratio for incident dialysis patients. This measure is defined as the ratio of the number of observed first modality switches from in center hemodialysis to home dialysis, either peritoneal or home hemodialysis, that occur for adult incident ESRD dialysis patients treated at a particular facility to the number of modality switches that would be expected given the characteristics of the dialysis facilities patients and the national norm for dialysis facilities. The measure includes only the first durable switch that is defined as lasting 30 continuous days or longer. Next slide, please.

The numerator is the observed number of first switches from in center hemodialysis to a home dialysis modality, either peritoneal dialysis or home hemodialysis among eligible patients at the facility during the time-period. The denominator is the expected number of first switches from in center hemodialysis to a home dialysis modality among eligible patients at the facility during the time-period given the national average of modality switches and patient case mix at the facility. Next slide, please.

Finally, we'll talk about the preview period for January 2024. Next slide, please.

The preview period for the January 2024 DFCC release will be held November 1st through 15th. Facility level reports will be posted on dialysisdata.org. During the preview period, you can submit comments to us at CMS on the measures included in this report. Your comments will be shared with us but will not appear on the DFCC website. Next slide, please.

We also want you to know that at this time, CMS will no longer provide patient lists upon requests to dialysis facilities during the preview period. We understand that this has been a helpful tool in reviewing your data. We are committed to continuous improvement and investment in the development of new technologies and tools. Our team is actively exploring alternative solutions that meet our standards while also providing a seamless and efficient way to share information. We truly appreciate your understanding and your patience during this transition. Next slide, please.

So, in summary, the January 2024 release will include the updating of clinical quality care measures that Golden discussed earlier, as well as the addition of the COVID-19 healthcare personnel vaccination measure. The preview period for the January 2024 release will be held November 1st through 15th on dialysisdata.org. The preview report for January 2024 will also include the dry run of the standardized modality switch ratio for incident dialysis patients. And again, at this time, CMS will no longer provide patient lists upon requests to dialysis facilities during the preview period.

And with that, thank you all, and I'll pass it back to Emily.

Moderator: Thank you, Stephanie.

We are now going to start the Q&A portion of the webinar. As a reminder, you can ask questions using the Q&A box. Please note that CMS has colleagues on today from the University of Michigan Kidney Epidemiology Call Center and RTI to assist us with answering questions. Responses to questions not answered during the webinar will be posted with the other webinar materials on the cms.gov ESRD general information page after the webinar.

So, the first question that we have today is “when will the quality of patient care Star Ratings be updated on DFCC?”

Golden Horton: I'm sorry, I'm having some technical difficulties, Emily. Great question. The Star Ratings for DFCC will be updated this October, in the coming weeks.

Moderator: Great. Thank you, Golden.

Another related question, “What updates will be made to the October 2023 patient quality of care Star Rating release?”

Golden Horton: Emily, I'm going to actually kick this over to our UM-KECC folks to answer that question.

Moderator: UM-KECC, you may be on mute if you're trying to answer the question.

Jennifer Sardone: Hi, Emily. Could you repeat the question real quick? Thank you.

Moderator: Of course.

The question is “What updates will be made to the October 2023 patient quality of care Star rating release?”

Jennifer Sardone: Okay, yeah, let me just go back to that slide here a second.

Hold on one second.

So, the Star Rating updates include a resetting of the Star Rating distribution with adjustment to the domain one measures to reflect COVID-19 impact, down-weighting of domain three—which is total KTOV and hypocalcemia—and the addition of two transplant weightless measures that have been on Care Compare already, the PPW and the SWR.

Moderator: Great, thank you very much for answering that question.

We have another one related to measures. “What measures are being adjusted for COVID-19?”

Golden Horton: Thanks, Emily, I'll take that one.

So, with the October 2023 release, we have incorporated patient level time limited risk adjustment for COVID-19 for the following measures: the standardized mortality ratio, the standardized hospitalization ratio, the standardized readmission ratio, and lastly, the standardized transfusion ratio.

Moderator: Thank you, Golden. Very helpful.

Another measures question. “What are the new measures being added to the DFCC October release?”

Golden Horton: Great question, Emily.

So, again, the two new measures that are being added to DFCC for the October 2023 release includes the standardized emergency department and counter ratio, SEDR, and the standardized ratio of emergency department encounters occurring within 30 days of hospital discharge, which is also known as ED-30 for dialysis facilities.

Moderator: Great, thank you. Very helpful.

Moving into a few questions about the January 2024 release. “What data will be updated with that January 2024 release?”

Golden Horton: Thanks, Emily.

As stated in the slide we did earlier, the final following clinical care quality measures on Dialysis Facility Care Compare have been updated from April 2022 through March 2023, which includes: adult and child patients who had enough waste removed from their blood during hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis, adult patients who had too much calcemia in their blood, adult patients who receive treatment through arteriovenous fistula, adult patients who had a catheter or tube left in a vein for at least three consecutive complete months, for their regular hemodialysis treatments on measurement of NPCR PCR for pediatric hemodialysis patients,

and patients who are on the kidney or pancreas transplant waiting list. The following measures have also been updated, and again, we will share these slides with you all after the call: hemoglobin management and the phosphorus concentrations in the blood.

Thanks, Emily.

Moderator: Thank you for running through that Golden.

Another question related to the January 2024 release. “What new measures will be added to DFCC with the January 2024 release?”

Golden Horton: Thanks, Emily.

Just an overview, Dr. Clark discussed CMS will be adding the CDC’s COVID-19 healthcare personnel vaccination measure to DFCC in January 2024 release. A couple of the other Compare sites as well are also incorporating this same measure. Of course, CMS believes it is important to incentivize and track healthcare personnel vaccination, as Stephanie mentioned, in dialysis facilities.

Moderator: Thank you, Golden.

Moving into a few questions about the January 2024 preview period. “Can you restate when exactly that preview period is for the January 2024 release?”

Golden Horton: Sure, Emily.

That preview period is coming soon. So, the preview for the January 2024 DFCC release will be held November 1st through the 15th, 2023. Facility level reports will be posted on dialysisdata.org.

Moderator: Great, thank you.

And then are you able to go into a little more detail about what measures will be included in the dry run table in the January 2024 preview report?

Golden Horton: Sure, great question.

I know a lot of folks are anxious to, kind of, see what this will look like. So, in January 2024, the preview report, there will be a dry run table that will preview the standardized modality switch ratio for incident dialysis patients. The SMOsR is defined as “the ratio for our incident dialysis patients”. So, we have the slide up which gives it, you know, a little more of the description in reference to what will be available for the January 2024 preview report.

Moderator: Thank you, Golden.

Another related question. “Will patient lists be available for the January 2024 preview reports?”

Golden Horton: So, Stephanie covered this one, and I know this is new for a lot of folks, but at this time, CMS will no longer provide patient lists upon request to dialysis facilities during the preview period. We understand that this has been a helpful tool in reviewing your data. We are continuing to explore options for facilities to have access to the data in the future. So, we are working on some options, and hopefully we can circle back with the community in the coming months.

Moderator: Thank you, Golden. That's very helpful.

Just looking at more of some of the questions that came through in the chat. “Will there be a time when CMS moves measures back to covering the January 1 through December 31 timeframe?”

Golden Horton: Hi, Nathan.

Actually, we do cover the January through December 31st timeframe with our measures, but I'm going to punt this one over to UM-KECC, maybe, just to give you a couple of more details to hopefully answer that question.

Jennifer Sardone: Okay, thanks, Golden.

So yes, what you said was correct. Every October release, the clinical measures are covered through the January 1st to December 31st time period. I'm not sure if that was the intent of your question, so if I'm not understanding it correctly, just go ahead and maybe ask it a different way. We can get back to it.

Moderator: Thank you both for answering.

Moving on to some more questions. “NHSN is only counting the new COVID booster. How is that going to affect a facility's score?”

Golden Horton: I'll try to attempt to answer this one. I know this is new in reference to the HCP personnel vaccination, so I may be a little unclear in reference to the new COVID booster and what the question is, because I think our measure is a little different, and I'll let folks from my team chime in in case they want to add something.

Stephanie Clark: Sure, Golden, I can jump in.

So, the measure that's going to be in DFCC is the current measure in QIP. In the Proposed Rule this year, the updated version of this measure has been proposed for adoption in QIP. And so,

if that is finalized, then we would update it in the way that you had suggested and the way that NHSN has proposed the new up-to-date definition, which will be helpful moving forward. So hopefully that answers the question.

Moderator: Thank you, Stephanie, for the additional context.

Moving into another question, “During the preview period, if a facility has questions about their data, what is the workaround for seeing the patient level data?”

Golden Horton: Great question, Emily.

We are actually looking to see what options we have, but during preview period, if you see any issues with your data, please reach out to us and we can see what we can actually do in reference to a workaround. But I don't have a definitive answer at this time. UM-KECC, Stephanie, any of you guys, please jump in if you have anything to add.

Moderator: Alright, thank you, Golden.

Another question that came through the chat. “How will the new COVID-19 HCP vaccination measure be incorporated into domains and weighting?”

Golden Horton: Stephanie, do you want to answer that one? It's similar, I guess, to the response you, kind of, answered earlier.

Stephanie Clark: I think that if the question is specifically about domains and weighting, it is not in the Star Ratings. It will be reported, though, on DFCC.

Moderator: Thanks for clarifying, Stephanie. Super helpful.

Another question. “Can you speak to the rationale for no longer providing patient reports during the quarterly DFC preview periods?” And then the person who asked the question also mentioned that the reports allow them to investigate and raise any data quality concerns.

Golden Horton: Thanks, Emily. Great question.

We are actually transitioning our systems within CMS to make things a little more secure. So, our hope and goal in the future is for facilities to possibly be able to go in to pull their facility lists. So, we are working on that within a transition. We will look at internally, you know, how we can help you guys investigate any data concerns found through the preview period, so we would definitely circle back with that.

Moderator: Thank you, Golden.

Moving on to another question. “Would you please explain how the comment process is impacted by not receiving patient lists?”

Golden Horton: So, I'm not sure if I am understanding the question. So, comment process. I'm assuming preview period. I mean, preview period would still be open, and I'm actually going to kick it over to our folks at UM-KECC just to see if they can, kind of, explain what takes place during the preview period.

Moderator: Great.

UM-KECC, just as a reminder, the question is, “Would you please explain how the comment process is impacted by not receiving patient lists?”

Jennifer Sardone: And so, what Golden said was correct. The comment process is the same as it has been in terms of facilities have 15 days to log in to dialysis data to take a look at their reports and submit questions to us through the dialysis data portal. But yes, we will not have patient lists available for comparison for this quarter.

Moderator: Thanks for confirming, Jennifer.

Another question for the group, “Is the COVID HCP measure for DFC different than the COVID HCP measure in QIP?”

Golden Horton: Stephanie, do you want to take this one?

Stephanie Clark: Sure. I had actually touched on that before, but yes, it is the same measure that is in QIP.

Moderator: Thanks for confirming, Stephanie.

Another question. “To confirm, are the ICH-CHAPS Star Ratings put on a forced distribution like the clinical Star Ratings?”

Golden Horton: Thanks, Emily.

I'm going to punt this one over to our ICH-CAHPS folks to chime in on this.

Amy Hendershott: Thanks, Golden.

At this time, the ICH-CAHPS Star Ratings will remain as they are. They will not—they're not on this forced distribution.

Moderator: Great. Thank you, Amy.

Moving on to another question. "October public data will be released in the PDC, correct?"

Golden Horton: That is correct.

Moderator: Great. Thanks, Golden.

Another question states, "Will there be a public comment process to address any of the DSE changes discussed on this call?" And then the person who asked the question was specifically referring to the addition of new dry run measures, the bell curve reset methodology, and the decision to stop providing patient level preview data lists.

Golden Horton: Thanks, Emily.

I don't know if we're going to have a, per se, a public comment process, but we are looking to have some listening sessions to have some conversations and get some feedback from the ESRD community and stakeholders. So, at that time, we will definitely take into consideration these questions and concerns and see if we can come up with an answer. I just want to point out we do have tips for our methodology in reference to creating the methodology that we do use. Please let us know to get on our mailing list or e-list listserv to be able to be notified about these things, but great question.

Moderator: Great. Thanks, Golden.

Moving on to the dry run measure, "What is the timeframe of this data? They're wondering if it's 2022 data."

Golden Horton: I am going to defer to my folks at UM-KECC.

Jon Segal: Yeah, hi there.

It's from 2019 to 2021. So, it's that three-year period.

Moderator: Thanks for clarifying, Jon.

Another question states, "What is the quality indicator assessed with the new dry run measure?"

Golden Horton: Great question. I am going to also defer this one to our folks at UM-KECC.

Jon Segal: So, I think we're talking about the standardized modality switch ratio. So, this is essentially an indicator of the number of people who make the transition from in-center hemodialysis to a home-based therapy relative to what we would expect, based on the makeup at the facility.

Moderator: Great. Thank you very much.

Another question asks “Will the ESRD providers be sent an email notification to alert us that the five-star data has been released? We would need to be aware of the data release in advance if possible.”

Golden Horton: Great question.

We are looking to release the five-star data this month, in the next week or so. We hate to actually give an actual date because you are, as you guys know, things can kind of change. So, please be on the lookout for our email. Please, if you aren't on our listserv, please give us, or shoot, myself, I'm sorry, an email to be added. We do send out a listserv immediately after the website has been refreshed. I'm just sharing what has been refreshed on the website and letting folks know where to go in case they have questions.

Moderator: Perfect. Thank you, Golden, for that explanation.

The last question that we have in the chat box right now asks to expand on the preview period process question. The person who asked the question stated that they normally have to pinpoint where they see discrepancies in the data, but without the patient list, they're not able to pinpoint discrepancies. I don't know if you have, could speak a little to that or give a little more explanation around that question or that concern.

Golden Horton: Thanks, Emily.

We definitely understand the difficulty within this transition. So, we're looking at all of our options in reference to this, and hopefully we can circle back with more information.

Moderator: Yes, and as a reminder, the questions that were asked today will be posted to the ESRD General Information webpage in the coming weeks, so you'll be able to review all the answers to these questions as well.

But we can give a couple more minutes just to see if anything else comes through.

We'll give it a few seconds just to see if anyone else has any other questions that came up.

Alright, it looks like we don't have any other open questions. So, this does conclude the Q&A portion of the webinar. I'll now pass it back to Golden to close out today's presentation.

Golden Horton: Thank you, Emily, and thank you all for joining. This was quite the call today. We appreciate all the feedback and the questions. I know we haven't updated the Star Ratings in quite a while, so I know quite a few folks are excited in reference to that. We are here to answer any questions that you all have. Also be on the lookout for some information in

reference to some opportunities to join us for some listening sessions as we gather more feedback in reference to the ask from the ESRD community.

With that being said, again, thank you all for joining us today. Have a good rest of your day.