

Part One: Outpatient Surgical Care

Patient Experience at Ambulatory Surgery Centers (ASCs) and Hospital Outpatient Departments (HOPDs)

Report Highlights

- Patients who had a same-day surgery are more favorable about care in ASCs than hospital outpatient departments on all four domains of patient experience, especially in their willingness to recommend the facility.
- Patients report less favorably about their experience with communications in both HOPDs and ASCs during the pandemic than in the year prior, an issue critical to ensuring patient safety.
- More transparency is essential: more HOPDs and ASCs need to publicly report on the experience of their same-day surgery patients, and the findings need to be published in a consumer-friendly manner.

Where the data comes from

This report analyzes patient experience data collected by hospital outpatient departments (HOPDs) and ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) through a standardized survey called the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems Outpatient and Ambulatory Surgery Survey (OAS CAHPS). This report analyzes facilities that issued an OAS CAHPS Survey to their patients reflecting a time period of calendar year 2019 (pre-pandemic), as well as facilities that issued an OAS CAHPS Survey to their patients reflecting a time period of July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021 (mid-pandemic), and then reported this data to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). More information on the content and interpretation of patient experience surveys can be found in [Appendix A](#).

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted health care delivery at every level and setting, from staffing shortages to increased infections to the very care patients receive. It has never been more critical to assess patient perspectives, both to assure that the patient voice is accounted for and heard, and to obtain vital information on the overall safety and quality of care being delivered. This report is the first in a three-part series from The Leapfrog Group examining patient experience during the pandemic.

Over 60% of all surgeries are performed on an outpatient basis (meaning that the patient is discharged on the same day the procedure is performed) either in a hospital outpatient department (HOPD) or ambulatory surgery center (ASC), and this continues to rise. The Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems Outpatient and Ambulatory Surgery Survey ([OAS CAHPS](#)) measures the experience of patients undergoing same-day surgery in HOPDs or ASCs. Leapfrog asks facilities participating in the Leapfrog Hospital Survey and Leapfrog ASC Survey to report the results of the OAS CAHPS surveys administered to their patients, so that patients, employers, and purchasers can access this critical information. Leapfrog makes patient experience information available on its public reporting website, which allows users to search and compare patient experience at HOPDs and ASCs. Though CMS also publishes OAS CAHPS results for some facilities, they can only be accessed via a downloadable database that is not intended for layperson use.

The systematic collection of patient experience information after same-day surgery provides tremendous value for patients. Studies have shown that reliable patient experience data correlates significantly with safety and quality, and the collection and use of the data helps put patients at the core of health care delivery^{1,2}. Just as people seek out customer reviews and ratings before making online purchases, they can benefit from learning about patient perspectives on health care services before they decide where to receive care³. This is particularly the case for same-day procedures such as cataracts, hernia repair, or arthroscopic surgery for which patients almost always have the opportunity to research in advance where they would like to have their surgery performed. Without Leapfrog's public reporting of these [data](#), patients may struggle to find and compare information on the experience of other patients at an ASC or HOPD when choosing where to seek care. Leapfrog and its health care purchaser constituency call on all hospitals and ASCs across the U.S. to conduct the OAS CAHPS survey and report results to CMS and Leapfrog.

Adult Patient Experience in Hospital Outpatient Departments and Ambulatory Surgery Centers

The four areas of care covered on OAS CAHPS surveys include:

- General information about the facility and staff
Was the patient treated with respect by all staff and clinicians, was the facility clean, was the check-in process smooth?
- Communications from staff about the procedure
Was the patient given information on what to expect before, during, and after the procedure?
- Overall rating of the facility
How do patients rate the facility on a scale of 1 - 10?
- Willingness to recommend the facility
Would patients recommend the facility to friends or family?

Details about each measure and underlying questions, along with the response options, can be found in [Appendix B](#) of this report.

ASCs and HOPDs that voluntarily administered the OAS CAHPS survey and submitted their results to CMS were included in this analysis. It examines patient experience data from before the COVID-19 pandemic (January 1 to December 31, 2019) and during (July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021).

Analysis

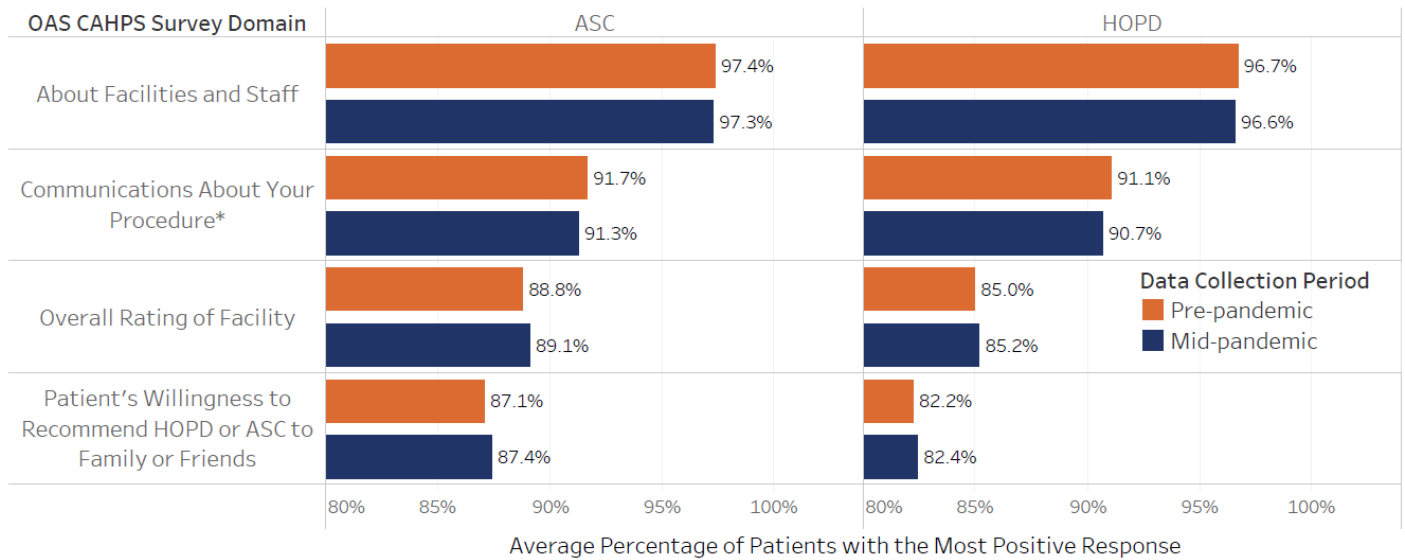
To evaluate ASC and HOPD performance on OAS CAHPS, Leapfrog looks at the percent of survey respondents who chose the most positive response for a given item. For example, a patient may indicate that nurses *always* listened carefully to them or that they would *definitely* recommend the facility to friends or family. Across all domains of patient experience examined through OAS CAHPS, a higher percentage of patients gave ASCs the most favorable response than those that gave the most favorable response to HOPDs. On average:

- Patients at both ASCs (97.3%) and HOPDs (96.6%) were more likely to give the most favorable responses to the **About Facilities and Staff** survey questions.
- Patients who selected the most favorable response for **Communications About Your Procedure** varies between ASCs (91.3%) and HOPDs (90.7%).
- Patients gave more favorable responses for **Overall Facility Ratings** at ASCs (89.1%) than at HOPDs (85.2%).
- Patients were least likely to give a favorable response on their **Willingness to Recommend** the facility, with an average of 87.4% of ASC patients and 82.4% of HOPD patients indicating that they would definitely recommend the facility.

The starkest difference between ASCs and HOPDs on patient experience is in Willingness to Recommend, with a five-percentage point difference favoring ASCs in the percent of patients who would definitely recommend the facility to family or friends in need of an outpatient procedure. ASCs also outperformed HOPDs on overall rating by a similar margin. This demonstrates that many ASC leaders have offered a positive experience to their patients that may give them a business advantage.

When comparing pre-COVID data to the most current data available, both facility types have shown the pandemic era brought with it a significant decline in patients' experience with communications about their procedure. This decline is more evident in HOPDs (90.7% vs. 91.1%) than ASCs (91.3% vs. 91.7%), though both have worsened. Clear communication from nurses and doctors about a patient's procedure is a crucial component of patient safety.

Average Percentage of ASC and HOPD patients who gave the most favorable responses on the OAS CAHPS survey pre-pandemic (2019; n=341 ASCs, 1064 HOPDs) and mid-pandemic (Mid-2020-Mid-2021; n= 392 ASCs, 1161 HOPDs).



Asterisk (*) denotes p-value < .05 for ASCs and HOPDs. Source: CMS (may include consolidated data from multiple hospitals)

Though the vast majority of patients gave positive feedback on their experience with outpatient surgical procedures despite the pressures of the pandemic, there remains significant room for improvement with both ASCs and HOPDs. While many elective procedures were delayed in 2020 and 2021, the data suggest that patients had a mostly positive experience when their surgeries were performed. Most of the patient experience reporting remained stable between the period prior to the pandemic and during the first COVID year, with statistically insignificant changes over the time period for all domains except communications about the procedure, a vital patient safety indicator. These findings suggest that outpatient surgical care may have escaped some, but not all, of the pandemic-era erosion of quality noted for inpatient care and other settings, according to national analyses by CMS and the CDC ⁴.

The Importance of Public Access to Patient Experience Data and Other Assessments of Quality and Safety

The OAS CAHPS survey is a useful tool for a variety of stakeholders, as long as the data is publicly available to them. Though CMS collects this data from ASCs and HOPDs, it is only made available to the public via a downloadable database which is challenging for consumers to use effectively. Furthermore, reporting OAS CAHPS to CMS is not yet mandated for HOPDs and ASCs, and therefore only available for facilities that voluntarily report this information.

Leapfrog reports patient experience for facilities that voluntarily report to the Leapfrog Hospital Survey and the Leapfrog ASC Survey. The Leapfrog Surveys are the only opportunities for facilities to report OAS CAHPS results in a consumer-friendly format. Results of same-day surgery patient experience surveys are available and accessible at Ratings.LeapfrogGroup.org. Results for the areas measured in this report are displayed under “Experience of Patients Undergoing Elective Outpatient Surgery.”

While all hospitals and ASCs can report to the Leapfrog Surveys at no cost to them, some decline to participate. If a hospital or ASC declines to report to Leapfrog, employers, patients, and community members are encouraged to contact facility leadership and ask them to do so.

For facilities that voluntarily participate in the Leapfrog Surveys, the act of public reporting is valuable not only for patients and families who entrust their lives to the facility’s care, but also for the facility’s physicians, nurses, staff, and leadership. They benefit from understanding how their patients experienced care in the facility and be able to identify gaps tied to safety and quality. Two ASCs, the [Center for Spine and Joint Replacement](#) in western Washington and [Coronado Surgery Center](#) near Las Vegas, highlighted the value that Survey participation has had on their quality improvement efforts in a series of [case studies](#).

Conclusion

Leapfrog’s assessment of the OAS CAHPS survey results between a pre-COVID and mid-COVID timeframe reveals that patient experience remained relatively stable with the advent of the pandemic, a potential contrast to indications that inpatient care saw sharp declines. Though patients at both ASCs and HOPDs generally provided favorable responses about their experience, same-day surgery centers continue to surpass hospital outpatient settings when it comes to reported patient experience. That said, the sample size for both facility types remains relatively small, with far fewer ASCs voluntarily completing OAS CAHPS surveys and then providing those results to CMS than HOPDs. This relative lack of transparency suggests the potential of selection bias influencing the results. Until more facilities are transparent, the contrast in patient experience between settings of care cannot be characterized as definitive. What’s more, the value of this information is undermined when patients and other stakeholders cannot easily access or comprehend the findings. Leapfrog’s efforts to expand quality and safety reporting in the outpatient surgical setting, including patient experience surveys, are critical to ensuring patients have the information they need to make the right health care decisions for themselves and their families.

Patient Experience During the Pandemic: A Three Part Series From The Leapfrog Group

Upcoming Reports

Part Two: Adult Inpatient Care (Early May)

Part Three: Pediatric Care (End of May)

Appendix A: How Patient Experience Surveys Work

A random sample of patients who have had specific surgical procedures performed in an outpatient setting (HOPD or ASC) are asked to complete an OAS CAHPS survey. Surveys are most often administered by an experienced survey vendor and are distributed by mail, telephone, or by mail with a telephonic follow-up.

Across all domains on OAS CAHPS surveys, participants are asked to check a box reflecting their experience with their care. Most frequently, these questions are phrased with response options like *Never*, *Sometimes*, *Usually*, *Always*; or *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Agree*, *Strongly Agree*. Other times questions are phrased to ask for a 1 – 10 response, where 1 is the least favorable and 10 is the most favorable.

To evaluate overall facility performance on these surveys, Leapfrog looks at the “Top Box Scores,” which is the percent of survey respondents who chose the most positive response for a given item. For example, a patient may indicate that nurses *always* listened carefully to them or that they would *definitely* recommend the facility to friends or family. Looking at the Top Box Score is an approach to understanding responses reflecting the most positive sentiment. In this report, the Top Box Score is referred to as the most favorable response (e.g., *Always* or *Strongly Agree*). To analyze the data included in this report, Leapfrog calculated the average Top Box Score among facilities for which data is available.

Example of a HCAHPS Survey question. In this case “Definitely yes” is the top box.

19. Would you recommend this hospital to your friends and family?

- 1 Definitely no
- 2 Probably no
- 3 Probably yes
- 4 Definitely yes

The “Top Box Score”

Studies have shown that when used correctly, CAHPS results provide valid and reliable measures of quality and safety^{1,2}.

Appendix B: Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems Outpatient and Ambulatory Surgery Survey (OAS CAHPS)

About Facilities and Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the check-in process run smoothly? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Was the facility clean? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Were clerks and receptionists at the facility as helpful as they should be? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Did the clerks and receptionists at the facility treat you with courtesy and respect? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Did the doctors and nurses treat you with courtesy and respect? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Did the doctors and nurses make sure you were as comfortable as possible? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No)
Communications About Your Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before your procedure, did your doctor or anyone from the facility give you all the information you needed about your procedure? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Before your procedure, did your doctor or anyone from the facility give you easy to understand instructions about getting ready for your procedure? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Did the doctors and nurses explain your procedure in a way that was easy to understand? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Anesthesia is something that would make you feel sleepy or go to sleep during your procedure. Were you given anesthesia? (Yes/ No) • Did your doctor or anyone from the facility explain the process of giving anesthesia in a way that was easy to understand? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No) • Did your doctor or anyone from the facility explain the possible side effects of the anesthesia in a way that was easy to understand? (Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No)
Overall Rating of Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst facility possible and 10 is the best facility possible, what number would you use to rate this facility?
Patient's Willingness to Recommend HOPD or ASC to Family or Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you recommend this facility to your friends and family? (Definitely no/ Probably no/ Probably yes/ Definitely yes)

Survey Source: [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#)

References

¹ Isaac T, Zaslavsky A, Cleary P, Landon B. [The relationship between patients' perception of care and measures of hospital quality and safety](#). HSR. 2010;45(4):1024-1040.

² Kennedy G, Tevis S, Kent K. [Is there a relationship between patient satisfaction and favorable outcomes?](#) Ann Surg. 2014;260(4):592-600.

³ Press Ganey Associates LLC. [Consumer Experience Trends in Healthcare](#). 2021.

⁴ Lee A, Fleisher, M.D., Michelle Schreiber, M.D., Denise Cardo, M.D., and Arjun Srinivasan, M.D. [Health Care Safety during the Pandemic and Beyond — Building a System That Ensures Resilience](#). N Engl J Med 2022; 386:609-611. DOI: 10.1056/NEJMp2118285