Healthy York: Aligning Forces for Quality
Results of Consumer Panel Survey, Wave 1

This document provides a summary of the baseline results of the Healthy York: Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q) consumer panel. The consumer panel includes patients with diabetes (n=179), coronary artery disease (n=215) and heart failure (n=87). The Center for Opinion Research recruited panel members using random procedures. Family First Health, Memorial Primary Care, and WellSpan Medical Group provided lists of all patients who had an office visit for one of the three designated conditions during 2006. Eligible panelists were between the ages of 18 and 65, lived within York County, and provided confirmation they had the noted condition.

The panel is a tool for 1) evaluating the effectiveness of the AF4Q initiative, and 2) identifying issues that will improve patient comprehension of quality issues. Specifically, the panel survey instrument was designed to address four questions:

1. Have patients with chronic conditions and their physicians improved the effectiveness of their communications?
2. Have consumers increased their use and understanding of health care quality information?
3. Have consumers increased their understanding of their personal health risks?
4. Have consumers increased their understanding of the relationship between personal behaviors and personal health risks?

Effectiveness of Physician-Patient Communications

Patients appear comfortable with the inter-personal aspects of their health care. Most agree that their physician or health care professional treats them with dignity and respect, talks in a way they can understand, and spends enough time with them (Table 1). Patients are less likely to say that their provider helps them set specific goals for diet and exercise or teaches them to monitor their condition. Heart failure (HF) patients are more likely to "strongly agree" that their provider helped establish exercise goals and those with coronary artery disease (CAD) are less likely to agree that they have been taught to monitor their conditions.

Table 1. Experiences with Health Professionals in Past 6 Months		Condition		
		Diabetes	Coronary Artery Disease	Heart Failure
		Column %	Column %	Column %
A1: Explained things in a way you could understand	Strongly agree	47%	45%	48%
	Agree	49%	48%	44%
	Total Agree	**96%**	**93%**	**92%**
A1: Spent enough time with you	Strongly agree	48%	42%	45%
	Agree	44%	48%	43%
	Total Agree	**92%**	**90%**	**88%**
A1: Treated you with respect and dignity	Strongly agree	59%	61%	60%
	Agree	40%	36%	37%
	Total Agree	**99%**	**97%**	**98%**
A1: Helped you set specific goals to improve your diet	Strongly agree	30%	26%	37%
	Agree	49%	46%	40%
	Total Agree	**80%**	**72%**	**77%**
A1: Helped you set specific goals for exercise*	Strongly agree	17%	23%	33%
	Agree	48%	46%	31%
	Total Agree	**65%**	**69%**	**64%**
A1: Taught you to monitor your condition*	Strongly agree	41%	27%	37%
	Agree	46%	44%	48%
	Total Agree	**87%**	**71%**	**85%**
* p < .05				

Although these patients seem generally satisfied with the inter-personal aspects of their care, gaps do exist in the physician-patient relationship. Three in ten patients *disagree* that their doctor keeps them informed about drug interactions, nearly a quarter *disagree* that their doctor asks them about their health concerns, one in seven *disagree* that they work as partners with their physicians to manage their conditions, and one in seven *disagree* that they are actively involved with their physicians in developing their treatment plans (Table 2). Approximately one in four patients leaves their physician's office wishing they had been given more information.

Table 2. Health Related Behaviors and Experiences

		Condition		
		Diabetes	Coronary Artery Disease	Heart Failure
		Column %	Column %	Column %
A2: I am able to maintain a low fat diet	Disagree strongly	6%	5%	6%
	Disagree	35%	35%	26%
	Total Disagree	**41%**	**40%**	**31%**
A2: I read the label on food bought at the grocery store*	Disagree strongly	2%	5%	1%
	Disagree	11%	18%	24%
	Total Disagree	**13%**	**23%**	**26%**
A2: Friends and family often ask me for advice on health or healthcare issues	Disagree strongly	5%	4%	3%
	Disagree	34%	39%	35%
	Total Disagree	**39%**	**43%**	**38%**
A2: I exercise on a regular basis*	Disagree strongly	7%	6%	3%
	Disagree	32%	33%	36%
	Total Disagree	**39%**	**40%**	**40%**
A2: Most days of the week I eat at least five servings of fruits and vegs*	Disagree strongly	6%	6%	7%
	Disagree	34%	42%	28%
	Total Disagree	**40%**	**48%**	**35%**
A2: My doctor and I work as partners to manage my condition	Disagree strongly	3%	2%	2%
	Disagree	11%	15%	14%
	Total Disagree	**14%**	**17%**	**16%**
A2: My doctor asks me about my greatest health concerns	Disagree strongly	4%	2%	1%
	Disagree	23%	24%	20%
	Total Disagree	**27%**	**27%**	**21%**
A2: My doctor takes the time to talk to me about my needs	Disagree strongly	2%	1%	1%
	Disagree	11%	10%	9%
	Total Disagree	**13%**	**12%**	**10%**
A2: My doctor keeps me informed about drug interactions	Disagree strongly	5%	2%	5%
	Disagree	30%	27%	22%
	Total Disagree	**35%**	**29%**	**27%**
A2: I usually leave the doctor's office wishing I had been given more info	Disagree strongly	20%	19%	20%
	Disagree	58%	51%	51%
	Total Disagree	**78%**	**70%**	**71%**
A2: My doctor provides explanations I can understand about treatments and tests	Disagree strongly	1%	0%	2%
	Disagree	6%	7%	6%
	Total Disagree	**7%**	**7%**	**8%**
A2: I am actively involved with my doctor in my treatment plan	Disagree strongly	2%	1%	1%
	Disagree	12%	13%	10%
	Total Disagree	**15%**	**15%**	**12%**
A2: I feel comfortable asking my doctor questions about my healthcare	Disagree strongly	1%	1%	0%
	Disagree	3%	2%	6%
	Total Disagree	**4%**	**3%**	**6%**
A2: When I go to the doctor, I bring a list of questions or issues to discuss	Disagree strongly	2%	1%	0%
	Disagree	27%	23%	24%
	Total Disagree	**29%**	**24%**	**24%**
A2: I am persistent about asking my doctor questions until I understand	Disagree strongly	1%	0%	0%
	Disagree	7%	9%	7%
	Total Disagree	**8%**	**10%**	**7%**
* p < .05				

Many patients with chronic conditions do not engage in positive health behaviors. Two in five patients do not exercise on a regular basis, about two in five do not eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily, more than one in three are unable to maintain a low fat diet, and about one in four do not normally bring a list of questions or issues to discuss when they visit their doctor (Table 2).

The gaps in physician-patient communications are again evident when respondents are asked about the tests they receive to manage their diseases. While almost all patients receive the appropriate tests on a regular basis, fewer know what constitutes a "good" reading on those tests, only half believe their doctor explained well why the reading is important, and even fewer say the doctor provided material or recommended sources of information to help improve their understanding (Table 3).

Table 3. Disease Management

	Test		
	A1C*	LDL-C~	BP~
	Column %	Column %	Column %
Percent tested more than once in past 12 months	99%	97%	99%
Doctor reviewed results of test	97%	92%	89%
Knows what a "good" reading is	79%	49%	86%
Doctor explained "well" why reading is important to care	51%	44%	48%
Doctor provided material or recommended sources of information to improve understanding	55%	44%	35%
Patient understands why test is necessary	94%	96%	95%
* Diabetics only, ~ Diabetes and CAD only			

Understanding Personal Health Risks - Disease Knowledge

Patients with diabetes and HF appear generally knowledgeable about their conditions, although there may be some instances where patients are less certain about what they know than is desirable. Two objective knowledge tests were used to assess respondents' knowledge of their health conditions.[i] Both tests offered respondents 11 statements that they identified as "definitely true," "probably true," "probably false," or "definitely false." Do not know responses were counted as incorrect. On average, diabetics correctly answered 9 of the 11 statements (mean = 8.8, SD ± 1.4). Six percent of diabetics answered all 11 responses correctly and one-third had 10 or more correct. Only seven percent of diabetics had 6 or fewer correct responses. On average, HF patients correctly answered 9 of the 11 statements (mean = 9.4, SD ± 1.5). Twenty-eight percent of HF patients answered all 11 responses correctly and two-thirds had 10 or more correct. Only five percent of HF patients had 6 or fewer correct responses.

Although the aggregated knowledge scores suggest that these patients are knowledgeable about their conditions, the scoring of these items may make that knowledge appear more certain than it is. Those who answered "probably" or "definitely" true were counted as correct answers for "true" responses. The same coding is employed for "false" responses. Tables 4 and 5 gives an indication of how certain respondents are about their knowledge by displaying the proportion of "definitely true" and "probably true" responses.

Table 4. Chronic Condition Knowledge Scale for Diabetes		Condition: Diabetes, Column %
B4: Normal blood sugar is between 40 and 70	Definitely false	63%
	Probably false	17%
	Total False	**80%**
B4: If you feel thirsty, tired, and weak it usually means your blood sugar is high	Definitely true	38%
	Probably true	32%
	Total True	**70%**
B4: The best time to take insulin or diabetes pills is 15-30 min before a meal	Definitely true	40%
	Probably true	23%
	Total True	**63%**
B4: Insulin and diabetes pills make your blood sugar go down	Definitely true	56%
	Probably true	23%
	Total True	**80%**
B4: A person with diabetes should check their feet for blisters every day	Definitely true	93%
	Probably true	6%
	Total True	**99%**
B4: When you exercise, your blood sugar does down	Definitely true	67%
	Probably true	24%
	Total True	**91%**
B4: If you feel shaky, sweaty, and hungry it usually means your sugar is low	Definitely true	69%
	Probably true	25%
	Total True	**93%**
B4: If you suddenly get sweaty, nervous, and shaky, you should eat sugar	Definitely true	62%
	Probably true	23%
	Total True	**85%**
B4: If diabetes is not well controlled, it can injure both kidneys and nerves	Definitely true	91%
	Probably true	7%
	Total True	**97%**
B4: You should get your eyes checked every year	Definitely true	96%
	Probably true	4%
	Total True	**100%**
B4: In the morning, if you feel sick and do not want to eat, you should take half dose	Definitely true	6%
	Probably true	12%
	Total True	**19%**

Table 5. Chronic Condition Knowledge Scale for Heart Failure		Condition: Heart Failure, Column %
B5: Hot dogs are high in salt	Definitely true	78%
	Probably true	15%
	Total True	**93%**
B5: Canned vegetables are high in salt	Definitely true	60%
	Probably true	29%
	Total True	**90%**
B5: Cheese is high in salt	Definitely true	43%
	Probably true	28%
	Total True	**71%**
B5: Bacon is high in salt	Definitely true	81%
	Probably true	16%
	Total True	**98%**
B5: Crackers such as Wheat Thins or Triscuits are high in salt	Definitely true	43%
	Probably true	29%
	Total True	**72%**
B5: It is safe for someone with heart failure to do light exercise	Definitely true	81%
	Probably true	17%
	Total True	**99%**
B5: Swelling in the legs is a sign that someone's heart failure is getting worse	Definitely true	58%
	Probably true	28%
	Total True	**86%**
B5: Shortness of breath means that someone's heart failure is getting worse	Definitely true	57%
	Probably true	35%
	Total True	**92%**
B5: Feeling more tired than usual means that someone's heart failure is getting worse	Definitely true	47%
	Probably true	41%
	Total True	**87%**
B5: Weight gain means that someone's heart failure is getting worse	Definitely true	41%
	Probably true	28%
	Total True	**69%**
B5: Drinking alcohol can weaken the heart's pumping ability	Definitely true	62%
	Probably true	22%
	Total True	**84%**

Personal Health Behaviors - The Patient Activation Measure

The survey included the Patient Activation Measure (PAM) instrument to assess consumer knowledge, skills and confidence for self-management.[ii] The PAM instrument places consumers into one of four stages based on their confidence in their ability to self-manage their conditions. Stage 1 consumers do not understand that they need to play a role in their own health care, Stage 2 consumers lack basic knowledge about their condition, treatment options, and/or self-care, Stage 3 consumers have the basic facts related to their conditions and treatments, and Stage 4 consumers have made many behavioral changes, but may have difficulty maintaining those behaviors over time or during times of stress.[iii] Using the PAM stages as a guide, about two in ten diabetics and CAD patients, and about one in three HF patients, do not believe the patient's role in health care is important or lack the confidence and knowledge to take action (Table 6).

Respondents rate their ability to self-manage their conditions differently depending on circumstance. For instance, very few respondents *disagree* that they are responsible for managing their health conditions or that they must take an active role in their health. On the other hand, many more patients, about three in ten, are concerned that they can maintain lifestyle changes during times of stress and about two in ten have not been able to maintain lifestyle changes related to their conditions. About one in three HF patients and one in seven CAD and diabetics *disagree* that they can find solutions when new situations arise.

Table 6. Patient Activation Measure

		Condition		
		Diabetes	Coronary Artery Disease	Heart Failure
		Column %	Column %	Column %
B6: When all is said and done, I am responsible for managing my health condition^	Disagree strongly	0%	1%	1%
	Disagree	2%	0%	2%
	Total Disagree	**2%**	**1%**	**3%**
B6: Taking an active role in my own health is the most important factor in my health*	Disagree strongly	0%	1%	1%
	Disagree	1%	1%	0%
	Total Disagree	**1%**	**2%**	**1%**
B6: I am confident that I can take actions to prevent some symptoms or problems	Disagree strongly	0%	0%	0%
	Disagree	2%	4%	3%
	Total Disagree	**2%**	**4%**	**3%**
B6: I know what each of my prescribed medications do*	Disagree strongly	2%	3%	1%
	Disagree	6%	6%	15%
	Total Disagree	**8%**	**9%**	**16%**
B6: I am confident I can tell a doctor my concerns even when not asked	Disagree strongly	1%	0%	1%
	Disagree	2%	2%	5%
	Total Disagree	**2%**	**2%**	**6%**
B6: I am confident that I can follow through on medical treatments at home	Disagree strongly	1%	0%	1%
	Disagree	2%	4%	5%
	Total Disagree	**3%**	**4%**	**6%**
B6: I understand the nature and causes of my health condition	Disagree strongly	1%	0%	2%
	Disagree	5%	7%	10%
	Total Disagree	**6%**	**7%**	**13%**
B6: I know the different medical treatment options available for my condition*	Disagree strongly	1%	1%	6%
	Disagree	10%	8%	10%
	Total Disagree	**11%**	**10%**	**16%**
B6: I have been able to maintain the lifestyle changes for my condition	Disagree strongly	5%	1%	5%
	Disagree	13%	14%	12%
	Total Disagree	**18%**	**16%**	**16%**
B6: I know how to prevent further problems with my health condition*	Disagree strongly	1%	2%	1%
	Disagree	5%	6%	13%
	Total Disagree	**6%**	**8%**	**14%**
B6: I am confident I can figure out solutions when new situations wtih my condition arise*	Disagree strongly	3%	1%	6%
	Disagree	12%	12%	26%
	Total Disagree	**15%**	**13%**	**31%**
B6: I am confident I can maintain lifestyle changes even during times of stress	Disagree strongly	4%	5%	7%
	Disagree	20%	22%	33%
	Total Disagree	**25%**	**27%**	**40%**
Patient Activation Measure Categorical Score^	Stage 1	7%	11%	19%
	Stage 2	10%	10%	14%
	Stage 3	24%	27%	23%
	Stage 4	59%	52%	44%

* p. < .05, ^ p < .10

Use of Health Care Quality Information

A sizable proportion of patients are not very discerning when it comes to choosing physicians who can treat their conditions. Perhaps too many patients believe that all doctors are equally well-trained to deal with their conditions and that all doctors provide about the same quality of care. It is also true that few patients have either seen or used quality information related to hospitals and physicians during the past twelve months (Table 7).

Table 7. Assessing Health Care Quality and Use of Quality Information

		Condition		
		Diabetes	Coronary Artery Disease	Heart Failure
		Column %	Column %	Column %
C: Doctors in my community are equally well trained to deal with my condition*	Strongly agree	32%	21%	35%
	Agree	42%	42%	31%
	Total Agree	**74%**	**64%**	**66%**
C: Doctors in my community all provide about the same quality of care	Strongly agree	12%	7%	17%
	Agree	26%	33%	22%
	Total Agree	**39%**	**40%**	**40%**
C10: Doctors frequently make mistakes when they treat my condition	Strongly agree	9%	7%	13%
	Agree	21%	27%	24%
	Total Agree	**30%**	**33%**	**37%**
C10: Medical mistakes happen very frequently at hospitals in the area	Strongly agree	7%	5%	10%
	Agree	19%	20%	24%
	Total Agree	**26%**	**26%**	**35%**
C10: I need to take active steps to avaoid poor quality medical care	Strongly agree	24%	22%	33%
	Agree	48%	53%	45%
	Total Agree	**72%**	**75%**	**78%**
C10: Even well qualified doctors sometimes make mistakes or give poor care	Strongly agree	17%	13%	24%
	Agree	71%	76%	67%
	Total Agree	**88%**	**89%**	**92%**
C10: I know where to find information that compares the quality of hospitals and doctors	Strongly agree	10%	11%	15%
	Agree	45%	48%	43%
	Total Agree	**55%**	**59%**	**58%**
Did you see any information comparing the quality among different doctors in the past 12 months	Yes	18%	12%	22%
Did you use the information you saw comparing quality among doctors	Yes	53%	50%	68%
Did you see any information comparing the quality among hospitals in the past 12 months	Yes	46%	41%	48%
Did you use the information you saw comparing quality among hospitals*	Yes	24%	34%	51%
* p < .05				

Characteristics of Respondents

Patients with different health conditions tend to differ on several important background characteristics. Perhaps the most important difference relates to health literacy.[iv] This survey suggests that one quarter of diabetics, one-third of CAD patients, and nearly half of HF patients have limited health literacy (Table 8). HF patients are more likely than CAD and diabetes patients to be disabled and are less likely to have internet access. One-third of diabetics, one-quarter of CAD patients, and half of HF patients earn less than $35,000 per year (Table 9).

Table 8. Health Care Literacy

		Condition		
		Diabetes	Coronary Artery Disease	Heart Failure
		Column %	Column %	Column %
How often do you have problems learning about your condition because of written information	Always	2%	2%	2%
	Often	2%	4%	6%
	Sometimes	27%	27%	35%
	Occasionally	35%	34%	34%
	Never	35%	33%	23%
How often do you have someone help you read materials	Always	5%	6%	10%
	Often	5%	10%	6%
	Sometimes	15%	19%	22%
	Occasionally	26%	21%	23%
	Never	49%	44%	38%
How confident are you filling out medical forms by yourself	Extremely confident	47%	47%	37%
	Quite a bit	27%	23%	20%
	Somewhat	16%	18%	20%
	A little bit	4%	7%	10%
	Not at all confident	6%	5%	13%
Limited health literacy*	functional	74%	70%	57%
	limited	26%	30%	43%
* p < .05				

Table 9. Selected Demographic Characteristics

		Condition		
		Diabetes	Coronary Artery Disease	Heart Failure
		Column %	Column %	Column %
Education	Non high school graduate	12%	12%	14%
	High school graduate	44%	47%	50%
	Some college	11%	15%	13%
	Two-year or tech degree	9%	7%	9%
	Four year college degree	18%	10%	8%
	Postgraduate degree	6%	8%	6%
Employment status*	Fulltime	38%	45%	19%
	Part-time	14%	13%	7%
	Going to school	1%	0%	0%
	Keeping house	8%	1%	8%
	Unemployed	2%	2%	3%
	Disabled	20%	17%	40%
	Retired	18%	22%	23%
Has access to the Internet from home, work, or somewhere else*	Yes	84%	80%	65%
	No	16%	20%	35%
How often accesses the Internet	Several times a day	33%	38%	22%
	Once a day	17%	19%	22%
	3-4 times per week	14%	16%	15%
	1-2 times per week	12%	7%	16%
	Less than once per week	24%	21%	25%
Ever uses the Internet to find health related information	Yes	81%	82%	77%
	No	19%	17%	23%
Used the Internet to find information about the quality of a hospital or doctor	Yes	23%	27%	30%
	No	77%	73%	70%
Income*	Under $25,000	20%	14%	28%
	$25-35,000	13%	13%	22%
	$35-50,000	13%	15%	11%
	$50-75,000	23%	23%	13%
	$75-100,000	16%	21%	10%
	Over $100,000	8%	12%	7%
	Refused	7%	2%	10%
Has health insurance coverage	Yes	97%	97%	95%
	No healthcare coverage	3%	3%	5%
* p. < .05				

[i] Both the heart failure and diabetes knowledge tests were derived from two sources.

Gazmararian et al. (2003). Health literacy and knowledge of chronic disease. *Parent Education and Counseling 51*, 267 - 275.

Baker et al. (2005). A telephone survey to measure communication, education, self-management, and health status for patients with heart failure: the improving chronic illness care evaluation. *Journal of Cardiac Failure 11* (1), 36 - 42.

[ii] The Patient Activation Measure is copyrighted by Insignia Health. Center for Opinion Research staff used scoring guidelines provided by Insignia health to create the final PAM categorical scores.

[iii] This description of the PAM stages is taken from the Insignia Health license materials.

[iv] The items used to determine health literacy were taken from Wallace et al. (2006). Screening items to identify patients with limited health literacy skills. *Journal of General Internal Medicine 21*, 874 - 877.