HOSPICE ANALYTICS

National Hospice Locator (NHL)
Frequently Asked Questions
v. 1/24/12

1. **Who is the NHL designed for? What does the NHL do?**
   a. **The General Public** – to help anyone looking for a hospice, anywhere in the country, find one. In addition, consistent contact information and basic descriptive information about every hospice is included.
   b. **The Hospice / Healthcare Industry** – to assist hospice outreach efforts increasing identification of, access to, and utilization of hospice services.

2. **Does the NHL include quality measures?**

   Currently, the hospice industry does not collect standardized "hard" quality indicator data (i.e., consistently collected and reported, validated research questions), so the NHL cannot include or compare "hard" quality indicators at this time. However, most hospices are Medicare certified, and Medicare anticipates collecting this information in the near future.

   In the meantime, hospice industry regulations and surveys are changing rapidly. Memberships in state and national hospice organizations provide hospices with up-to-date education and regulatory information. Accreditation organizations provide onsite hospice surveys every 2-3 years, based on current hospice regulations. Hospice Analytics considers state and national hospice organization memberships and accreditation "soft" quality indicators (i.e., there may be a correlation between quality and memberships and/or accreditation). As such, Hospice Analytics encourages hospices to participate in these programs, and encourages anyone selecting a hospice to consider these "soft" quality indicators as part of their selection process.

3. **More detailed questions?**
   A variety of information resources are listed on search pages, please contact them with questions, including:
   a. **State Hospice Organization links** – Please contact state hospice organizations with local and state-specific questions. In fact, when the general public calls Medicare with hospice questions, Medicare refers callers to state hospice organizations.
   b. **State Department of Health links** – Most state departments of health contract with Medicare to provide hospice surveys, and many states require hospices to be licensed through the state department of health. Some state departments of health post hospice survey findings and results of complaint surveys.
   c. **National Hospice & Palliative Care Organization link** – NHPCO is the largest national membership organization devoted exclusively to promoting quality hospice and palliative care. Extensive hospice information can be found on their Web site (www.NHPCO.org) and through their consumer initiative Caring Connections (www.CaringInfo.org) Web site.
   d. **Medicare Hospice Center link** – Nearly 90% of hospice patients are Medicare beneficiaries, and nearly 90% of hospice revenue is earned through the Medicare Hospice Benefit. This link to the Medicare Hospice Center provides detailed information regarding the Medicare Hospice Benefit.

   The general public can also find additional helpful hospice informational links on the Hospice Analytics Web site (http://www.hospiceanalytics.com/patient-and-family-information).

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4. **What is unique about the NHL?**
   There is no other publically available, free, updated resource that geo-maps and provides information about every hospice in the country. Additional information:
   a. **Compassion**: Hospice Analytics has renewed compassion for the general public trying to find information about hospices. This project was much more challenging than expected, due to conflicting and inconsistent information obtained from every information source used. Hospice Analytics continues to work diligently, including outreach to all hospices in the country, to provide complete, comprehensive, and updated hospice information through a user-friendly and intuitive NHL Web site.
   b. **Making Medicare Data Publicly Available**: Medicare publishes information about Medicare-certified primary hospice locations available for purchase (i.e., the Provider of Service file), including ~3,300 hospice providers. However, their list does not include hospice satellite office locations (~1,500) or non-Medicare certified providers (~100) additional hospice locations.
   c. **Membership Organizations**: Nearly all state and national hospice organizations provide helpful and valuable information about their members – please review this information. However, this information is almost always limited to their members only, with limited or no information whatsoever regarding non-members, and information is provided in widely different formats. Their listings and information are valuable membership benefits, although incomplete for the general public searching for any / all hospices.
   d. **Other Directories**: Nearly all Web site hospice directories include disclaimers noting they are _not_ inclusive of all hospices and may not be up-to-date or complete.

5. **Where does NHL information come from? How current is NHL Information?**
   Hospice Analytics took nearly a year to gather preliminary hospice information for the NHL's public launch in November 2011. Hospice Analytics drew from multiple public sources, including:
   a. **Jan – November 2011:**
      i. Medicare 2010 Provider of Service file
      ii. Medicare 2009 Hospice Standard Analytic File (i.e., Medicare hospice claims), to be updated with Medicare 2010 Hospice Standard Analytic File information when available
      iii. Search of all 50 state department of health (i.e., state licensing body) Web sites
      iv. Search of all 48 state hospice organization Web sites, three national hospice organization Web sites, and four accreditation organization Web sites
   b. **November – December 2011:**
      i. Survey of all hospices included in the NHL database – all hospices contacted via postcard mailing and email notification
      ii. Update NHL database and Web site based on direct hospice feedback
   c. **2012:**
      i. Continued efforts to identify all hospice providers and post consistently collected hospice information.

6. **Tell me more about the Search Engine…**
   The NHL Search Engine is a remarkably helpful tool. Common questions and applications include:
   a. **Character Search**: Type four or more characters into the search box, and an auto-fill drop-down menu appears based on any matching characters in the state, county, city, and hospice name database fields. Clicking on a drop-down menu items loads that criteria into the search.
   b. **Numeric Search**: Type four or more numbers into the search box, and an auto-fill drop-down menu appears based on any matching numbers in the zip code database field. Clicking on a drop-down menu items loads that criteria into the search.
   c. **Sort Function**: How are hospices sorted underneath the map? Can users change how hospices are sorted? By default, hospices are sorted first by the number of Medicare beneficiaries served daily (i.e., "average daily census"), from largest to smallest; then sorted second alphabetically by hospice name. The number of Medicare beneficiaries served daily is calculated from the Medicare 2009 hospice claims data, or updated by individual hospices. Users can re-sort hospices matching their search criteria in any of three ways – "Medicare Beneficiaries" sorted largest to smallest, "Alphabetically" sorted A - Z, or by "Zip Code".

d. **Related Hospices**: Looking for information on a national hospice chain provider? Type the name into the search box and click on "search" (i.e., do not use the drop-down menu – rather, click on the magnifying glass next to the search box). All hospice names matching the search criteria will be mapped and detailed below the map.

e. **Special Searches**: Special search terms have been included in parentheses after the hospice name. To date, special search terms include:
    i. **Pediatric:** To find pediatric hospice programs.
    ii. **Circle of Life:** The American Hospital Association, in collaboration with several other organizations, offers annual Circle of Life Awards which honor innovative programs in palliative and end-of-life care. This is a national excellence award that Hospice Analytics believes deserves special recognition.
    iii. **Prison:** To find prison hospice programs.

7. **Internet Browsers**
    The NHL has been extensively tested using Internet Explorer 9.0 (available on Windows 7) and Firefox 4.0. Programming has been done to make the NHL compatible with several older versions of these browsers, and several other browsers. If trouble is experienced using older versions of Internet Explorer, please try using another browser (e.g., Firefox, Safari, Chrome, etc.).

8. **Print Results**
    Users can easily print information presented in the detailed results section for either a listing of hospices meeting search criteria or detailed information about a specific hospice. Of note, the print format has been tested with multiple computers, internet browsers, and printers. Information is formatted clearly and concisely on several printers tested, although not all. Firefox prints clearly to a PDF file, although Internet Explorer has difficulty printing to a PDF file. We continue to fine tune the print format feature.

9. **Major Updates to the NHL?**
    Hospice Analytics has already begun a list of potential features to include / exclude / change about the NHL – please contact us with any suggestions you may have. A review of major revisions will be conducted in June 2012.

10. **Additional questions or feedback specific to the National Hospice Locator?**
    Please email Hospice Analytics with any additional questions or feedback using the following online forms:
    a. General public: www.hospiceanalytics.com/contact-us.
    b. Hospices: www.hospiceanalytics.com/add-update-hospice.
    While email is preferred, Hospice Analytics can also be reached by phone at 719-209-1237.

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