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Nova Scotia Physician Achievement Review Report For

Dr.

File Number

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Your achievement

Congratulations! You have successfully completed the Nova Scotia Physician Achievement Review (NSPAR). Thank you for taking time from your busy practice to participate in NSPAR. We trust that the results repay that time by giving you a useful snapshot of your practice – identifying its strengths as well as the areas for potential improvement.

As you ponder action plans in response to this report, keep in mind that support is available from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia (including the NSPAR Medical Director, members of the College's Practice Improvement Committee, and NSPAR staff), as well as from the Dalhousie University Office of Continuing Medical Education. We encourage you to take advantage of these resources to discuss your report, determine action plans, or to simply offer your feedback on the NSPAR process and program. The necessary contact information can be found at the end of this document. Please feel free to use this information.

If you have any questions or concerns about the NSPAR review process be sure to alert the independent research firm contracted to administer the NSPAR surveys and physician reports. The contact for this research firm can also be found at the end of this document.

NSPAR has been designed to build a body of 'best practices', specifically those practices of outstanding physicians in the province. Over time, these best practices will be included in this document and on the NSPAR website: www.nspar.ca. We hope they will provide concrete ideas on practice improvement for all physicians in Nova Scotia.

Although the NSPAR methodology and tools have been extensively tested, physician feedback will impact future improvements to the program. It is our goal to evaluate NSPAR on a regular basis, in order to ensure the program is subject to continuous quality improvement.

Many thanks for your part in making the Nova Scotia Physician Achievement Review a valuable and effective tool for physicians in Nova Scotia.

Following is a series of questions and answers that we hope will provide clarification on various aspects of the Nova Scotia Physician Achievement Review program.

What is NSPAR?

NSPAR is a program of performance assessment and feedback that provides physicians with information about their medical practice through the eyes of their medical colleagues, co-workers and patients. Feedback is presented to physicians in a confidential report that contains individualized data and comparisons to the average scores of physicians with similar practices. Eligible physicians in Nova Scotia are required to participate in this process once every seven years.

Why was NSPAR introduced?

The College of Physicians and Surgeons is charged with ensuring that every physician continues to meet and advance the high standards of practice required to work effectively within the Nova Scotia medical community. NSPAR is designed to promote a culture of continuous quality improvement among Nova Scotia physicians and to offer a link between the peer review process and more focused professional development activity.

NSPAR provides individualized feedback to physicians completing the review process, to assist in their ongoing efforts to improve their medical practices, while recognizing that excellence in medical practice requires abilities that extend beyond the traditional measures of clinical skills and knowledge.

What does NSPAR accomplish?

NSPAR sets the stage for a culture of quality improvement among Nova Scotia physicians, both individually and as a group.

- Individual physicians – This arm’s-length review points out areas of strength and potential areas for practice improvement. Using this information, physicians can design a self-directed program of professional development to improve their practices.
- Physicians as a group – Over time, NSPAR will build benchmarks for excellence within the profession as a whole, while introducing a peer review process that is focused on professional development and continuous quality improvement. A regular and positive review process gives both the medical community and the public confidence that Nova Scotia’s physicians put a high priority on excellence.

Who participates in NSPAR?

Since 2005, family physicians in active, office-based, primary care practice for at least 3 years in Nova Scotia have been required to participate when selected. In late 2006, the program expanded to include a variety of medical and surgical specialties.

What does NSPAR assess?

NSPAR is designed to provide feedback in a variety of practice areas. The assessed attributes differ depending upon the type of reviewer (medical colleague, co-worker or patient).

More specifically, NSPAR questionnaires cover 15 attributes of practice performance:

- Medical Colleague - Clinical Competency
- Medical Colleague - Psychosocial Management of Patients
- Medical Colleague - Patient Interaction
- Medical Colleague - Professional Self Management
- Medical Colleague - Consultation Communication
- Co-worker - Patient Interaction
- Co-worker - Co-worker Collegiality
- Co-worker - Co-worker Communication
- Patient - Patient Interaction
- Patient - Phone Communication
- Patient - Information for Patients
- Patient - Personal Communication
- Patient - Office Staff
- Patient - Physical Office
- Patient - Appointments

Several questions explore each attribute. Those groups of questions are both statistically and logically linked, adding credence to the findings. The specific topics covered by each responding group vary slightly, to capture the differing insights gleaned from patients, co-workers and medical colleagues.

Why survey so many people?

The number of reviewers has been calculated to ensure the statistical reliability of the data. The multi-dimensional perspectives provided by patients, co-workers and colleagues provide a rounded and reliable view of your practice. This feedback is critical to the quality improvement cycle, which always involves measuring performance, analyzing the information, planning and implementing a response, then measuring performance again.

The detailed results in your NSPAR report are displayed against a backdrop of scores received by other physicians in similar practices, allowing you to compare your standing against a norm.

While an important source of information, this report is just a snapshot of your complex practice. You will need to assess the results in the context of your daily activity, decide which issues are important to you and what changes are desirable and possible.

Are NSPAR results confidential?

Yes. Confidentiality of information collected through the survey process is protected under the Nova Scotia Medical Act. NSPAR information is designed strictly for professional development purposes. Reports for individual physicians are protected from use or disclosure in any disciplinary process or legal proceeding. Individual surveys completed by the people you identified are held in confidence by Pivotal Research Inc., an independent research firm.

Does the College see my report?

Most physicians' reports are known only to Pivotal Research, the independent research firm that analyzes the questionnaires and administers the survey-based portion of NSPAR, and the individual physician. Only a small number of reports are seen by the Practice Improvement Committee of the College, which reviews flagged reports in a non-nominal fashion. These flagged reports represent those that are chosen for more in-depth confidential review according to the number or type of 'information' or 'commendation' flags. These are the reports that might offer the greatest opportunities for practice improvement, or the best ideas for the rest of the profession. In this case, only one committee member will know the identity of the physician and will not share that identity with the committee.

What happens if my report is reviewed?

Pivotal Research Inc. will provide your name, address and telephone number to one designated member of the Practice Improvement Committee. That member arranges a telephone interview with you to help place the report results in context. The goal of this interview is to better understand your report and the factors that may have contributed to your scores.

The results of this interview are discussed in a non-nominal manner (to protect your identity) by the Practice Improvement Committee. The committee either formulates advice for you about self-directed improvement or recommends a practice visit. Experience in other jurisdictions indicates that most physicians find peer practice visits to be enormously helpful in defining their needs and in identifying resources to make improvements. This visit is conducted by a colleague in a similar practice who is trained as a practice visitor. When a practice visit is assigned, the visitor does not see your report or any other information from the NSPAR process.

Can I request a peer practice visit?

Certainly! Upon receipt of your written request, Pivotal Research Inc. will forward a copy of your report to the Practice Improvement Committee. Practice visitors will follow an established protocol emphasizing the constructive focus of NSPAR. To keep their feedback as objective and educational as possible, they are not told the reasons for their visit before the review.

Interpreting your report

In the tables and charts on the following pages, you'll find two distinct pieces of information: your own scores and a comparison of your scores to benchmarks set by physicians in similar practices. The scores are broken into three sections, reflecting the feedback of each responding group: your medical colleagues, your co-workers and your patients. Finally, a two-page listing compares your self-assessment with others' perceptions and with the benchmark average for each question.

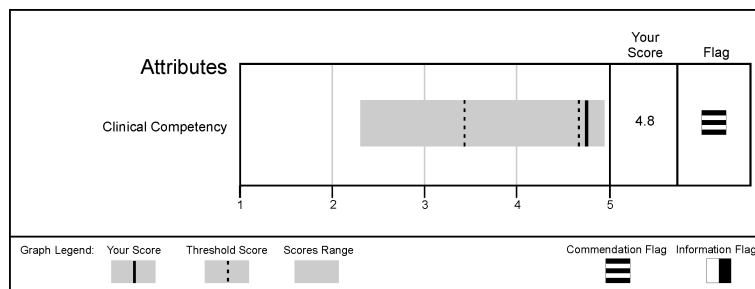
Check your personal scores

"Your Score" gives the average (mean) response to each statement or attribute. NSPAR uses a five-point scale, with 5 as near perfect. Thus, a 4 suggests your performance is perceived as above average. Because most people have a high regard for physicians, the typical report is skewed to the upper end of the scale. It is important to note that small differences (such as 4.1 versus 4.5) may reflect important distinctions in the perceived details of your practice.

Attribute and individual question results are not reported if an insufficient number of responses were received. These are indicated with an "NA".

Benchmark your performance

Next, note how your scores compare with those of your peers. Each review section opens with a summary chart. On that chart, gray blocks show the range of responses physicians have received for each attribute. Within the bands, you'll see dotted lines indicating both the lower and upper thresholds defined as scores at the 10th and 90th percentiles. The bold line shows your averaged score. To review scores on the individual items that make up each attribute, turn to subsequent pages in the applicable section.



Read the flags

Adapted from internationally recognized nautical flag symbols, flags are used throughout the report to signal areas deserving particular attention as you build your action plan.



Commendation flag. Appears beside any score equal to or above the 90th percentile. Whatever you are doing to earn these flags, continue! And please, be generous in sharing your ideas and practices with others.



Information flag. Appears when a score is less than 4.0 and equal to or less than the 10th percentile. This flag indicates a potential area for improvement.

Know yourself

Finally, remember that your NSPAR report is neither a measure of your value as a physician, nor an assessment of your knowledge and skills. It represents the perceptions of a defined group of patients, colleagues and co-workers, structured to address specific aspects of your practice and provide more reliable feedback than is commonly available. To be effective, your action plan must blend this new information with your own priorities and perceptions.

Using your report

This report opens new ways of thinking about your practice and new ways of making it a success. Below are some action steps you may find useful.

1. Recognize your strengths and commend yourself for your achievements. If asked, agree to participate in a peer practice visit so that other physicians can emulate your best practices.
2. Do not be too disappointed if some of your scores were lower than expected. Physicians have a tendency to be hard on themselves if they perform less than perfectly.
3. Think of your report as a tool for setting priorities. Ask yourself:
 - Is there a gap between the quality of the health care I want to offer and what my report suggests? If so, is that gap meaningful?
 - Do I need to change? If so, what, in particular, needs changing?
 - What action must I take to make that change happen?
4. Do not tackle everything at once. Rather, prioritize areas needing improvement, focusing first on those with greatest impact on patient care.
5. View this opportunity to make changes in a positive light. After all, NSPAR reviews are intended to be constructive. Finding new ways to deliver services can be interesting and increase your pride and satisfaction in your practice.
6. Invest the time to determine if your profile identifies real problems by involving others who know how your practice works. You might want to discuss the report with a colleague, your staff, or your patients. You might corroborate its main messages using other devices:
 - interviews with patients, co-workers, colleagues
 - staff meetings focused on report findings
 - comment cards in your office
7. List possible causes of problems. Think of your practice as a healthcare system with many inter-dependent processes and elements:
 - Patients (those who use the system)
 - People (those who work in the system)
 - Provisions (supplies)
 - Places (work environment)
 - Procedures (methods or rules of work)

8. Avoid jumping to conclusions. Ask yourself, and others, “Where can things go wrong?” before deciding “What is wrong?”
9. When you identify causes, develop some likely solutions such as adjusting the flow of patients, information, and work or accessing more resources. Sometimes, additional knowledge and skills are important. More often, the real issues have to do with workload and practice management issues.
10. Before implementing any proposed solutions, estimate their feasibility and discuss the implications with those who will be involved. Before making any major changes, run a pilot test.
11. Set targets for specific aspects of care, and measure your results. It can be easier to measure quality than you think. If your report highlights the amount of time patients are waiting as an irritant, measure that time. If it is the amount of preventative care provided to a target population, measure that. If it is patients’ understanding of their diagnoses and treatment, or if it is the content and timeliness of your letters, measure those things.
12. The information you collect and analyze about your practice can benefit the larger healthcare system. Share what you learn with the profession and health administrators, so the system can benefit.

Where can I turn for help?

The NSPAR website www.nspar.ca is a good place to start. There you'll find information about the program, a series of pertinent links, physician resources and contact names.

The following individuals will consult with you and point to other resources for developing and implementing your own unique action plan.

To ask about the NSPAR program or to request assistance, contact:

Dr. Bill Lowe
NSPAR Medical Director
c/o College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia
Sentry Place, Suite 300
1559 Brunswick Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2G1
(902) 421-2205

To access information about continuing professional development or continuing medical education opportunities, contact:

Dr. Douglas Sinclair
Associate Dean
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To find out more about how your report was prepared, contact:

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