

Patient Activation Measure® (PAM®) Frequently Asked Questions

This quick and easy guide will help you understand the basics of the Patient Activation Measure and why your practice is administering it to patients.



What is PAM?

PAM stands for Patient Activation Measure. The Patient Activation Measure® (PAM®) is a 13-item survey that helps you understand individuals' ability to manage their own health by measuring their knowledge, skills and confidence. By measuring patient activation, care teams can use tailored interventions to support patients as they increase their activation.

How does PAM work?

PAM consists of 13 general health statements in which a patient selects answers ranging from disagree strongly to agree strongly. The responses are then tallied into a score that ranges from 0-100. The PAM score is categorized into one of four levels of activation that range from low activation (PAM levels 1 and 2) to high activation (PAM levels 3 and 4). Providers can use the PAM levels to tailor care plans based on what will best support each patient.

How is PAM administered?

PAM takes 3-5 minutes to complete. It can be administered over the phone, on a tablet or paper, or via email, and in a variety of environments (e.g., at home or in the hospital or clinic). A PAM score change indicates the patient's progress before, during and after receiving care interventions and health coaching. To track changes in PAM score, patients need to have the PAM readministered.

Why is my practice administering PAM?

PAM is a quality outcome measure, which is sometimes referred to as a performance measure. These are tools that healthcare organizations use to measure their performance and successes, identify weaknesses and drive improvement. Your organization may be participating in a quality program that utilizes PAM. PAM is used by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in the United States in several value-based care models. It can also be used by eligible providers as a Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) improvement activity.

What should I tell patients if they decline to take the PAM?

Explain to the patient that PAM is a health assessment that helps their care team personalize their care and that it only takes 5 minutes to complete. Reassure them that their responses are confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside of their care team without their permission. If the patient has taken the PAM before but does not understand why they should take it again, explain to the patient that they must periodically retake the PAM so that their care team can measure their progress in providing quality care.

What are the top things to keep in mind when administering PAM?

1. If English is not their native language, administer PAM in their preferred language.
2. Read or present the statements in the order in which they appear.
3. Never change or paraphrase the wording of the statements.
4. Do not give prompts or encourage patients to respond in a certain way.
5. If the patient cannot or will not respond to a statement, mark N/A for “not applicable.”
6. If the patient responds to all statements with the same answer, interrupt the administration, explain that you need the patient to respond truthfully and that their responses will not affect their access to care or benefits. Then, start again from the top.
7. Do not disclose a patient’s PAM score or level to the patient.
8. Do not administer PAM if the patient is intoxicated, experiencing a mental health crisis or has just received a new or serious diagnosis.

Where can I get more information?

To learn more about PAM, please reach out to your Insignia/Phreesia representative.

