Patient Activation Measure® (PAM®)
Frequently asked questions

Phreesia

What does it mean for a patient to be activated?

Patient activation is defined as a patient's willingness and ability to self-manage their health and healthcare. It's a modifiable and predictive patient characteristic that forecasts how a patient will experience and utilize care, as well as how they will manage their disease(s).

Activation exists on a continuum, meaning that patients can become more activated as they increase their **knowledge** about medications and health, develop **skills** that help them maintain lifestyle choices and participate in their care decisions, and gain **confidence** in their ability to effectively communicate and follow up with their care team. Patients across multiple chronic conditions with higher levels of activation also experience better overall outcomes, including:

- Higher medication adherence
- Increased likelihood to seek preventive care
- Fewer avoidable emergency department visits
- Lower rates of hospital admissions and readmissions
- Better satisfaction

What is the Patient Activation Measure (PAM)?

The PAM is a series of 13 statements that assess patients' knowledge, skills and confidence in self-managing their health. It segments individuals into one of four activation levels that provide insight into an array of health-related characteristics, including attitudes, motivators and behaviors.

PAM is backed by extensive research. With more than 800 peer-reviewed studies that feature it as a key variable—and its endorsement as a performance measure by the National Quality Forum (NQF)—PAM is the gold standard for measuring patient activation.

How is PAM used in the KCC model?

For organizations participating in the KCC model, **gains in PAM scores at 12 months** (NQF ID #2483) is a quality measure used to evaluate performance.

PAM helps you understand patients on an individual level so you can identify their needs and abilities, improve risk stratification and deliver more personalized care. It also helps you understand patients at a population level so you can design more targeted approaches to help effectively allocate staff time and resources.

How do I meet the PAM performance measure requirement for the KCC model?

To meet the PAM performance measure (NQF ID #2483) for the KCC model, you must administer the PAM survey to eligible patients twice within a four- to 12-month period. Patients will receive a score between 0 and 100, and a positive score change in the second survey would mean the patient is gaining in their ability to manage their health.

A "passing" score for eligible patients would show an average net 3-point PAM score increase over a four- to 12-month period, while an "excellent" score would show an average net 6-point PAM score increase over that period.

How can I act on the PAM results?

In addition to segmenting patients into activation levels, PAM results offer insights into core counseling goals specific to each activation level.

For patients with lower activation levels, counseling goals include building basic knowledge, promoting self-awareness, developing self-management skills and connecting behaviors to outcomes. For those with higher activation levels, the focus shifts towards maintaining positive behaviors and pushing further—including closing knowledge gaps, striving for best practices and teaching skills to troubleshoot difficult situations.

How can I best support my patients to increase their activation level?

There are three important ways to support patients to increase their activation level:

- ✔ **Emphasize patient ownership.** As a provider, you can think of yourself as a coach. While you play a critical role in your patients' care, they are ultimately responsible for changing and self-managing their health behaviors.

- ✔ **Serve as a partner.** Your role is to support your patients, walk beside them, create goals, strategize and help them solve problems.

- ✔ **Verbalize your support.** This may sound simple, but it's crucial: During every interaction, tell your patients why you want to walk beside them on their health journey. Consistently reiterating that you care and want to support them will help you build trust and facilitate a more meaningful relationship.

Where can I get more information?

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

References

1. "Determinants of patient activation and its association with cardiovascular disease risk in chronic kidney disease: A cross-sectional study," *Health Expectations*, April 9, 2021.

2. "Exploring the Relationship Between Patient Activation, Treatment Satisfaction, and Decisional Conflict in Patients Approaching End-Stage Renal Disease," *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, Dec. 9, 2018.

3. "The association between patient activation and self-care practices: A cross-sectional study of an Australian population with comorbid diabetes and chronic kidney disease," *Health Expectations*, July 4, 2017.

4. "Patient activation with knowledge, self-management and confidence in chronic kidney disease," *Journal of Renal Care*, Nov. 5, 2015.