

MDS Elements and Their Rationale: Physical Therapy

Demographics

Demographic factors, such as age, sex and ethnicity, may influence practice patterns. By asking these basic questions it is possible to assess variations by the demographic factors. This can help planning for retirements and changes in the workforce. If a longitudinal data base is maintained, this demographic information only needs to be asked once.

- | | Month | Day | Year |
|---------------------|-------|-----|------|
| • Birth date | □□ | □□ | □□□□ |
- The full month, day, and birth year allows linkage with other data sources and assures greater accuracy over time. It also provides the appropriate data to determine the age distribution of the health profession and assess attrition patterns.
- **Sex, Ethnicity, Race**
Basic demographic information is collected to provide general descriptive characteristics of the profession being analyzed. Data can be used to identify disparities and inform outreach efforts to encourage people to join the profession.

Education and Training

This information allows for assessment of the relationship between educational characteristics and practice patterns, including migration patterns after education, such as in state retention. The basic education and training data can be collected at the point of the initial licensure application, although it may need to be updated as appropriate for continuing professional education.

- **Entry-level degree for health profession**
The entry-level degree earned in a health profession is asked of the practitioner not only to provide descriptive characteristics of the profession but to allow for comparison across states, regions, or other localities of the practitioners. For physical therapists, this information is relevant to model practice laws and scope of practice of the practitioner.
- **Year of completion of entry-level degree for health profession**
Year of education is asked of practitioners to ascertain approximately how long they have been in practice. This question can provide critical data for studies of professional attrition and retirement. This information is also helpful in matching individuals across data bases.
- **Location of Training (degree) for health profession (school, state, country)**

Location of training is important for several reasons. Migration studies can be conducted by determining location of training as compared to practice location. As applicable, the question provides critical information on the number of foreign graduates that are entering the profession.

- **Certifications, Specialties, Post-Graduate Training**

Certifications, specialties, and/or post graduate training questions are asked as applicable since for many professions, it can help to further delineate the focus of their practice (example, physician board certification can better differentiate primary care practitioners from internal medicine subspecialists). This question allows for assessment of the specialty or area of concentration of the practitioner.

Practice Characteristics

- **Employment Status: What is your employment status?**

- Actively working in the field of PT/PTA
- Actively working in a field other than PT/PTA
- Not currently working, looking in the field of PT
- Not currently working, not looking in the field of PT
- Retired

We recommend asking the question in this way to ensure that data needed for HPSA analysis are consistently collected (i.e. being licensed doesn't mean that a health professional is actively practicing).

- **Practice Locations of Direct Patient Care**

The MDS asks for both a principal and secondary practice site and address to allow for better precision for those practitioners specifically who are counted in developing HPSA designations. The specific address allows for geocoding against the larger service area. To be better able to determine HPSA designation sites, we also recommend asking for the number of direct patient care hours worked in these sites.

- **Hours Per Week Worked in Direct Patient Care**

We recommend asking practitioners the number of hours they spend per week providing direct patient care. This question allows for detailed analysis by states in determining profession-specific FTEs.

- **Weeks Worked in Past Year in Direct Patient Care**

Asking the practitioner for the number of weeks worked in the last year in direct patient care allows for detailed analysis by states in determining profession-specific FTEs; question assesses whether or not a practitioner is full time.

- **Practice Settings**

Asking for the specific setting from a list of options that most closely corresponds with principal and secondary practice locations for direct patient care is important to determine where practitioners are actually distributed when delivering care.

- **Practitioner Plans over the next five years**

Asking practitioners about their plans over the following five years provides a preliminary understanding of potential attrition issues and retirement possibilities.