

**Ontario Hospital Association**  
**Question and Answers**  
**Hospital Standardized Mortality Ratio (HSMR)**  
December 2010\11

**1. What is Hospital Standardized Mortality Ratio (HSMR)?**

HSMR stands for Hospital Standardized Mortality Ratio, which the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) has calculated for acute care hospitals in Canada (excluding Quebec). HSMR is a “Big Dot” indicator and measure that reflects the number of deaths observed in a hospital relative to what would be expected, based on the average Canadian experience. It has been used by hospitals in many jurisdictions to assess and analyze mortality, and to identify areas for improvement.

**2. What does it mean to be an “eligible” hospital when it comes to the HSMR?**

Eligible hospitals refers to those acute care hospitals that have a minimum of 2,500 HSMR All Cases separations for the 2004-05, 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11 fiscal years. Hospitals with less than 2,500 HSMR cases in any reporting year are not publicly reported because the results are deemed less stable and, therefore, less reliable.

**3. Are HSMR results site-specific?**

No, CIHI reports reporting Ontario HSMR results by hospital corporation only.

**4. Why is the HSMR an important measure?**

HSMR has been used by hospitals in several countries to assess in-hospital mortality rates and to help organizations identify areas for improvement. As a quality indicator and a measure to help hospitals and health professionals follow trends in their hospital mortality rate, HSMR can be used as yet another tool to help improve quality of care and patient safety over time.

**5. Is HSMR a more or less valuable tool than the other quality indicators?**

It is neither. HSMR is a “Big Dot” indicator and measurement tool that compares a hospital’s mortality rate with the overall average rate. Like other indicators, HSMR provides hospitals and health professionals with results useful for highlighting potential areas for further investigation and should be looked at in a broader context which incorporates additional quality and safety indicators. The analysis of HSMR and other patient safety indicators, when coupled with system-level improvements based on that analysis, have led to significant performance and quality improvements in other jurisdictions.

**6. Can hospitals compare their HSMR results against other organizations?**

The HSMR tool is not intended to serve as a measure for hospitals to compare themselves against other organizations, or for the public to use as a measure of choosing where to seek care. The HSMR should be used as a tool by hospitals

to help follow their own progress over time, and make quality improvements based on the results.