

# Improve health equity by collecting patient demographic data

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In an effort to ensure equitable treatment outcomes, physicians should look at a broad range of patients' personal information, such as race and ethnicity. The collection of demographic data can help inform treatment plans. For example, ACE inhibitors treating hypertension have been proven to be less effective for African-Americans than other classes of medication such as calcium channel blockers or thiazide diuretics.

By creating a standardized process for collecting this information, physicians, clinics and health systems can take steps to ensure all patients have the potential to reach optimal treatment outcomes.

An AMA continuing medical education module shows how physicians and other health professionals can collect patients' demographic information in a standardized way and use that information for quality-improvement initiatives related to population health.

Included in this free module is a case study on using such data to analyze hypertension-control treatment outcomes across populations in clinical care and mitigate gaps in treatment results. Accurate risk adjustment using patient demographic data can also help physicians boost their clinic's revenue.

Collecting race and ethnicity data can help improve the quality of care for all patients because, according to the module, it helps practices:

- Identify and address differences in care for specific populations.
- Distinguish which populations do not achieve optimal interventions.
- Assess whether the practice is delivering culturally competent care.
- Develop additional patient-centered services.

Patients sometimes question why race and ethnicity information are collected. This module will help health care organizations articulate to their patients why collecting demographic data helps improve patient care.

## **Implement standard process for collection**

When asking for patient race and ethnicity data in your practice, an important step in implementation is creating a standard process. Many EHRs are already set up to collect this data, but your staff might not be properly trained on how to ask patients for this information. This education module provides health care organizations with tools to help train their staff on how to ask for this information and address patient questions about providing race and ethnicity data.

Physicians should advocate for staff training to effectively and accurately collect this information in the electronic health record. Practices can begin the process by creating a registry of patients missing this information in their files and flag the records. Following staff training they can work to reduce the number of patients missing this information.

The CME module is available in the AMA Education Center. The AMA has designated this enduring activity for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*.