

Improving Care in the NHS

Privacy policy

What is the purpose of this project?

The Clinical Effectiveness Unit uses Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) data to support our programme of national clinical audits and service evaluations that examine the quality of care delivered by the English NHS. In particular, we use HES data to produce information on patterns of clinical practice and patient outcomes for English NHS organisations.

We use HES as a source of hospital data on individual patients. In some circumstances, we link HES data with Civil Registration (Mortality) data to describe patterns of survival after hospital treatment. The linked HES-Civil Registration data allows a study to include deaths which occur after discharge from hospital (which are not available from HES data alone). This produces a more complete picture of health care outcomes for organisations and patients.

Where does the project get the HES and Civil Registration data?

The HES datasets are supplied by NHS Digital and cover hospital admissions, outpatients visits, and Accident and Emergency (A&E). The Civil Registration (Mortality) data are also supplied by NHS Digital, who have received them from the Office for National Statistics. The Office for National Statistics is the data controller for the death register. The data we receive are not shared with any other organisation, and will only be kept for the duration of the project.

More information about HES and the contact details of NHS Digital can be found on the webpage: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/data-tools-and-services/data-services/hospital-episode-statistics>

The HES data are stored in a secure, IT environment at the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS). Access to the data is only available for approved individuals and security is maintained through the use of passwords and encryption. The RCS conforms to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other legislation that relates to the use of pseudonymised patient data.

Is it possible to identify individuals within the HES and Civil Registration data?

The HES and Civil Registration data do not include sensitive personal information such as name, address or postcode. Individuals are labelled with an anonymous identifier which makes it impossible to identify people without adding other information. We are not permitted to add data from other sources by NHS Digital.

What if I do not want my information used by the project?

The CEU cannot identify patients within the HES and Civil Registration data, and so cannot remove a person's information from the data supplied by NHS Digital.

All patients can opt to have their information removed from the Hospital Episode Statistics database by contacting NHS Digital. For more information on opting out, please visit the following webpage

<https://digital.nhs.uk/about-nhs-digital/our-work/keeping-patient-data-safe/how-we-look-after-your-health-and-care-information/your-information-choices/how-opt-outs-work>

How do we analysis the HES data?

Our work produces a range of statistics which are reported at different levels of aggregation. This includes producing information by NHS hospital to support quality assurance activities within these organisations, as well as at a national and regional level to support policy makers and commissioners. This information is published in reports, peer reviewed journals and in presentations to patient groups, healthcare professionals and healthcare researchers. When presenting information in these ways, we do not publish information at the level of an individual.

The programme of work involves identifying patient groups within the HES data, and then describing trends and variation in the number of patients treated, differences in their characteristics (such as age, ethnicity, whether they suffer from other conditions), the treatments given and outcomes of care.

What is the Legal basis for processing the data?

The “Improving Care in the NHS” project processes data under Article 6(1)(e) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which allows for the processing of data where this is carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in our data controller.

The HES-Civil Registration data are classified as personal data under the GDPR.

Please contact us if you have any questions about our privacy policy or information we hold about you. Email address: dcromwell@rcseng.ac.uk