Massachusetts Acute Care Hospital Outpatient Observation Data—Quarterly Update

October 2019 through June 2024 (Preliminary)

Introduction

The Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) provides analyses of health system utilization to inform payers, providers, policymakers, and the public using information from its Acute Hospital Case Mix Datasets, including the Outpatient Observation Dataset (OOD). Observation visits are classified as outpatient care and serve a variety of functions, including the reassessment of clinical status and/or continued testing beyond the care provided in an emergency department.

In January 2022, CHIA first published Massachusetts Acute Care Hospital Outpatient Observation Data (FFY 2016-2019). This report provided information and analyses of hospital outpatient observation utilization patterns in the period leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic and presented measures of observation utilization overall and by hospital, patient, and visit characteristics.

Building upon that report, CHIA has developed a quarterly update series to complement existing inpatient and emergency department (ED) treat-and-release visits reporting focused on outpatient observation visits, which includes an interactive dashboard and an accompanying databook. The first quarterly update was published in May 2024 on data from October 2018 through December 2023. These quarterly updates use interim data to present analyses on a quarterly basis at a statewide and hospital level. In the November 2024 quarterly update, data from FFY 2019 is no longer displayed in the dashboard but can still be found in the databook.

The data in the quarterly updates are preliminary. The OOD dashboard and databook are updated at each release with more complete information as it becomes available and as CHIA continues to work with providers and payers to process and confirm data submissions through the annual data collection process.

This dashboard includes data from October 2019 to June 2024 and is organized in the following six sections:

- Total Acute Care Volume
- Statewide Utilization
- Utilization by Hospital
- Visit Characteristics
- Diagnoses
- Behavioral Health

Total Acute Care Volume

This section shows the total volume of acute care hospital visits and discharges in Massachusetts by Case Mix categorization. Discharges/visits are categorized by inpatient stay, outpatient observation, and emergency department (ED) treat and release.

Statewide Utilization

The utilization section includes the total number of outpatient observation visits and average length of stay, in hours. Measures are shown for all hospital outpatient observation visits across Massachusetts as well as by hospital cohort, high public payer status, age group, sex, race/ethnicity, and primary payer type.

Utilization by Hospital

This section presents hospital-level observation utilization measures on a quarterly basis for all acute care hospitals in Massachusetts. The measures included are total visits and average length of stay. The databook includes tabs for hospital utilization by age group, sex, primary payer type, discharge setting, and behavioral health-related visits

Visit Characteristics

This section shows statewide observation utilization patterns by age group, sex, race/ethnicity, and primary payer type.

Diagnoses

This section presents common primary diagnoses associated with observation visits by age group at a statewide level. Additionally, the average length of stay for each of these primary diagnosis categories is provided.

Behavioral Health

This section shows total visits and average length of stay for outpatient observation hospital visits associated with any behavioral health condition and by specific behavioral health diagnosis categories. These estimates are presented for all outpatient observation visits statewide and by age group.