

# Postoperative Delirium Measures

## WHAT IS THE PROJECT?

Postoperative delirium (POD) is the most common surgical complication in older adults, though it remains underdiagnosed. It can initiate a cascade of deleterious events, including major postoperative complications, prolonged hospitalization, poorer outcomes, impaired functional independence and cognitive function, and death. Due to myriad emotional, behavioral, and cognitive changes that may persist for months after surgery, POD can have a profound effect on the day-to-day lives of patients and their families. Research suggests that up to 50 percent of all delirium cases are preventable through quality improvement and multiple risk factor reduction. Given the seriousness of the condition and the scarcity of quality measures to assess care for patients with POD, we need more measures focused on the prevention and timely diagnosis of POD.

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**This NQF Measure Incubator® project is the first step toward facilitating the development of needed performance measures to support the prevention of postoperative delirium and improvement of postoperative function.**

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## STRATEGY SESSION

NQF convened a Measure Incubator® strategy session with a multistakeholder Expert Panel in August 2019. At this meeting, expert panelists discussed many quality-of-care issues that contribute to the high incidence of POD. The Panel urged a “universal precautions” approach, noting that all patients are at risk for POD. Providers, patients, and families should be educated about the risks, signs, and symptoms of POD accordingly.

Panelists emphasized the importance of identifying and mitigating patient risk throughout the surgical care pathway along with timely diagnosis and treatment. The Expert Panel identified and prioritized nine measure concepts that could become performance measures for POD, including routine risk assessment and screening, evidence-based prevention and mitigation interventions, and outcomes. Panelists recommended further exploration of standardized tools and care pathways and data automation needed to improve patient care and operationalize performance measurement in POD.

NQF engaged a broadly based stakeholder group in this Measure Incubator® project, including individuals who have experienced POD, clinicians, payers, researchers, and measure developers.

## WHAT IS THE ENVISIONED OUTCOME?

Building on the recommendations from the NQF-convened strategy session, NQF seeks to facilitate the development of one or more measure concepts into fully specified and tested performance measures. NQF will explore funding to support measure development and testing beginning in fall 2019.

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**This work creates a solid foundation for measures that will improve the care and health outcomes of surgical patients by ensuring timely diagnosis along with appropriate preventive care and treatment for POD.**

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NQF is delivering this project through the Measure Incubator® with financial support from **Medtronic**. In accordance with the **NQF Measure Incubator Conflict of Interest Principles**, Medtronic has not influenced the outcomes and activities associated with this project.