

Melanoma Survival Measures

WHAT IS THE PROJECT?

Melanoma is the fifth-most commonly diagnosed cancer in the United States and the deadliest form of skin cancer. The incidence of melanoma continues to increase worldwide, along with treatment costs. Earlier detection, together with advances in treatment (particularly for advanced disease), is leading to improved patient outcomes. However, disparities in the quality of cancer care and variation in survival outcomes persist, and there are no nationally adopted survival measures for melanoma. Thus, the nation needs measures that examine melanoma survival rates.

This NQF Measure Incubator® project facilitated the development of needed performance measures that assess survival outcomes among patients with melanoma.

PHASE 1: STRATEGY SESSIONS

NQF convened a Measure Incubator strategy session with a multistakeholder Expert Panel in October 2017. At this meeting, panelists discussed a range of measures focused on survival, quality of life, shared decision making, and goal-concordant care. The Panel emphasized that, regardless of cancer type, survival rate measures must be paired with measures that explore the patient's quality of life and the clinical actions taken.

Panel members also highlighted the importance and complexity of risk-adjusting outcome measures. The Expert Panel identified five measure concepts that could become performance measures for melanoma. Panelists recommended further exploration of whether survival outcomes should be measured for all stages, stratified by stage, or as stage-specific measures as well as exploration of data challenges, including attribution, small population sizes, and timeliness of data.

NQF engaged a broad-based stakeholder group in this Measure Incubator project, including individuals with melanoma, patient advocates, oncologists, dermatologists, relevant specialty societies, health services researchers, and measure developers.

NQF delivered this project through the Measure Incubator with financial support from **Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS)**. In accordance with the **NQF Measure Incubator Conflict of Interest Principles**, BMS did not influence the outcomes and activities associated with this project. NQF conducted this project in parallel with a **lung cancer measures project** to maximize efficiencies in measure development and testing.

PHASE 2: MEASURE INCUBATION

Building on the recommendations from the NQF-convened strategy session, NQF prioritized one measure concept for initial development—overall survival rate for melanoma, stratified by stage.

Substantial upfront effort focused on investigating various data sources to support measure development. KM Healthcare Consulting led initial development of this measure concept, along with **lung cancer measures**, into fully specified performance measures, gathering input from expert panelists and other clinical experts to develop pre-testing specifications. Experts were enthusiastic to see progress in establishing national measures for melanoma survival. Experts suggested that this work could meaningfully contribute to cancer survival measurement by exploring persistent measurement challenges related to small population sizes and the definition of care teams for purposes of accountability.

Building on the initial development work, **Mathematica** tested the melanoma survival measure along with **three lung cancer measures**, using a combination of national and state cancer registry data and registry-linked databases. This project was completed in October 2021.