

BEST PRACTICES FOR ANALYZING PAM[®] DATA



Summary of key insights gained from years of analysis of PAM survey data:

1. **Consider PAM scores of 0 and 100 as “missing data”**

We have found that when a respondent answers all statements in the PAM survey as either “strongly disagree” or “strongly agree” it indicates an invalid response. In these cases, it is likely that the respondent is not acknowledging or reflecting on the content of each item within the survey, but is instead answering in a rote manner. The PAM survey has a built-in difficulty structure designed to make it progressively harder to give the same answer for each statement, making answers that do not vary highly unlikely. Therefore, we recommend that scores of 0 (all strongly disagree) or 100 (all strongly agree) be discarded as missing data. As much as 5% of a data set may be affected by such missing data.

2. **Analyze PAM score changes over time within and across PAM levels**

When assessing changes in PAM scores over time or when comparing outcomes among intervention and non-intervention groups, the analysis should focus on PAM score changes within each PAM level. For example, examine the degree of PAM score change occurring among PAM Level 1 respondents (or Levels 1 and 2 combined if your sample size is smaller). Most change occurs within the lowest levels of activation (Levels 1 and 2), and patients with lower activation also tend to have higher utilization and costs. Interventions and support tailored toward helping individuals in Levels 1 and 2 can have the greatest net impact. Respondents in Levels 3 and 4 experience much less change in activation in response to an intervention. So you could miss important findings if you only investigate change in PAM score alone rather than investigating the change in PAM score within each level. This layered approach to analyzing PAM score and level outcome data is supported by the National Quality Forum (NQF), which has endorsed PAM as a PROM.

3. **Insure adequate power to assess changes within level.**

Power your study with sufficient statistical significance to be able to assess changes within PAM level.

4. **Analyze your data with both PAM score and PAM level as predictors.**

Experience has also shown that sometimes it is best to assess outcomes by using PAM score as a predictor and sometimes it is best to use PAM level. This is because there can be a continuous relationship between PAM score and the outcome, while on other occasions, there is a threshold effect. Thus, it is best to try your analysis using both approaches to see which one best fits your data.