

AHRQ Quality Indicators™



QUALITY INDICATORS™ SOFTWARE Results of Comparison Testing Between SAS v2020 and WinQI v2020 Software

Prepared for:

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The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Quality Indicators™ (QI) were developed specifically to meet the short-term needs for information on healthcare quality using standardized, user-friendly methods and existing sources of data. The AHRQ QI program is unique in that it provides free, publicly available software tools that calculate the AHRQ QI rates. The software allows users to calculate QI rates based on their own administrative data using a standard desktop computer.

Each version of the QIs is released with software in two different platforms: a SAS®† application and a Windows application. The SAS software was first released in the late 1990s. It consists of several modules of SAS code and requires a SAS license to run. The Windows-based software, known as WinQI, was first released in 2005. It was created in order to provide an easy-to-use, low-cost option for calculating the QIs that was not dependent on licensed software. Developed on Microsoft® Visual Studio using C# and .NET, AHRQ WinQI runs on Windows operating systems and requires only freely available software components: AHRQ-produced software, Microsoft .NET (for runtime environment and core software libraries), and Microsoft SQL Server Express (for data storage and manipulation).

Table 1 lists the differences between SAS QI v2020 and WinQI v2020. WinQI software is available in Version v2020 as 64-bit application only and runs on Windows 8 and above operating systems.

Table 1. Differences between SAS QI v2020 and WinQI v2020

SAS QI v2020	WinQI v2020
Requires licensed SAS software	Requires free downloadable software
User can modify the software	User is unable to modify the software
Data load and error checking at the discretion of the user	Includes data load and error checking functions
User must run a set of programs for each module, and all indicators in a module are displayed in output	All four QI modules calculated in a single program, and user can select which indicators to output
Observations with FIPS codes not present in the population file are excluded from Area level metrics.	Observations with FIPS codes not present in the population file are included in Area level measures.

Both versions of the QI software are updated on an annual basis to reflect changes in the AHRQ QI technical specifications. New software versions and updated technical specifications are released simultaneously. Routine annual updates include yearly International Classification of Diseases, 10th revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM/PCS), Medicare Severity-Diagnostic Related Groups (MS-DRG), Major Diagnostic Categories (MDC), updated version of the limited license 3M™ APR-DRG grouper, new Census population files, and newly derived risk adjustment parameters.

The AHRQ QI software goes through rigorous testing prior to release, including the following:

- Comparison of rates produced through AHRQ QI SAS and AHRQ WinQI, aggregated and detailed provider/county-level
- User testing on the installation.

This document summarizes the testing results for AHRQ QI software, WinQI v2020 (released in July 2020) and SAS QI v2020 (released in July 2020). Testing was performed using AHRQ Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP) data: ~7 Million total discharges in Wisconsin, Michigan, Rhode Island, Florida, North Carolina, Washington, and Arizona using the 2017 HCUP State Inpatient Databases (SID). To ensure comparability of Area rates, the year of all observations was set to 2017 and observations with a FIPS code not in the 2017 population data were removed.

The rates were calculated using SAS QI v2020 and AHRQ WinQI v2020.

Test Results

- We observed no variances in the observed and risk adjusted rates between v2020 SAS QI and WinQI for all indicators contained in PQI, IQI, and PSI modules.

[†] SAS[®] is a statistical software package distributed by the SAS Institute, Inc. SAS and all other SAS Institute Inc. product or service names are registered trademarks or trademarks of SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA. The company may be contacted directly regarding the licensing of their products. The SAS Institute, Inc. has no affiliation with AHRQ nor involvement in the development of the AHRQ QI. For more information, visit the SAS Institute website at <http://www.sas.com>.

[‡] HCUP Databases. Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP). 2017.