

## Benchmarking and healthcare quality improvement: indicators program

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ITAES is an accrediting entity for health institutions recognized for developing healthcare quality and safety standards with a focus on continuous improvement and an Institutional Member of ISQua. Headquartered in Argentina and with presence throughout Latin America, ITAES has been working with hospitals, clinics and other healthcare facilities for more than 30 years.

The Institute has conducted over 1,000 external quality evaluations. In 2016, they decided that PICAM is mandatory in one of its Accreditation Programs, helping healthcare facilities understand the importance of this intra-institutional reflection process.

### About PICAM

The Quality Indicators Program for Medical Care (PICAM for its acronym in Spanish) currently includes more than 70 entities from Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay, which work together with ITAES experts using benchmarking methodology.

Collecting 67 easily obtainable data through direct documentation (primary sources), from different service areas, the Program's key objective is to facilitate periodic comparison. Thus, 30 comparability indicators are systematically constructed and self-referenced in time and between participating healthcare facilities. They have access to standards related to the rest of the PICAM population, visible in the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles of each indicator.

*PICAM is ideal for helping resolve a frequent paradox in healthcare facilities: the wealth of records accumulated in computer systems can coexist with poverty of information for management, due to the lack of tools to exploit this data and convert it into indicators.*

Indicator monitoring is a fundamental tool for decision-making in management, as it allows managers to understand the current performance of their organization and identify areas for improvement. This information can be used to make informed decisions that help the organization achieve its objectives.

The benefits of this tool include improved decision accuracy with objective information, reduced risk by identifying potential problems and increased costs, and increased efficiency by identifying areas for improvement. In the health field, reference indicators are very useful.

*"Quality is doing what needs to be done, even when no one is watching us," as Henry Ford once said. Therefore, seeking external rewards is not the only consideration. Instead, we should also focus on developing an internal reflection process within the organization that aims for improvement.*

## Data uploading, review and discussing

The data upload process is simple. Establishments designate a representative to PICAM who will enter data monthly, through a platform designed for intuitive use. The ITAES technical team then validates the data, making corrections if necessary. The validated information will then be included in the database to calculate the general reference indicators, always taking care of the confidentiality of each one.

The annual PICAM data collection process concludes with the Plenary Session, led by the ITAES staff and with all the establishments incorporated into the Program, to present the report of the last period and generate a space for exchange. The indicators surveyed and the problems identified according to the statistics are reviewed. In this way, ITAES can analyze and discuss aspects that seek the renewal of PICAM's tools, processes and contents.



The medians of the indicators are usually published on the ITAES website, making the results more transparent and providing the opportunity to contribute to improving the quality of all establishments in general. For their part, the establishments participating in the program received complete information on the reference values.

RECENTLY, ONE OF THE GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS WAS TO MAKE AVAILABLE TO THE ESTABLISHMENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAMME THE VISUALIZATION OF INDICATORS ON A "POWER BI" DASHBOARD. THERE, THE PROGRESS OF EACH ONE OF THEM OVER TIME (MONTH BY MONTH AND YEAR BY YEAR).

## 2024 and beyond

In recent years, particularly from 2021 to the present, we have made significant strides in the rapid identification of specific issues. Also, we have emphasized the importance of fostering a community among health service providers. Our goal is to share information that enhances patient safety.

As PICAM approaches its 20th anniversary, we still believe that collaboration allows us to achieve greater outcomes together, ultimately leading to higher-quality care.

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