

## **ACS NSQIP PUF Eligibility Requirements / Rules / FAQs**

The American College of Surgeons National Surgical Quality Improvement Program® (ACS NSQIP®) Participant Use Data File (PUF) is a research dataset of all cases entered into NSQIP in a calendar year. The PUF is de-identified as to hospital, patient, surgeon, state, province, region, etc. Patient information is HIPAA compliant and there are no hospital IDs or pseudo-IDs. The PUF uses data from the ACS NSQIP July Semiannual Report (SAR) and is historically released in the autumn of each year.

The PUF is available to eligible staff (generally understood as hospital employee) at participating and active ACS NSQIP hospitals. All PUF requests will be sent to the referenced hospital to confirm eligibility. The ACS will not process any requests without that approval.

### **ACS NSQIP PUF Request and Approval Process**

- 1) PUF request is submitted electronically via the online request form located here:

<https://www.facs.org/quality-programs/data-and-registries/acs-nsqip/participant-use-data-file/>

By entering an online request, the applicant will be able to specify the type, years, and formats of the files they would like as well as agree to the Data Use Agreement (DUA). A request cannot be made without the requestor electronically agreeing to the DUA. Only active NSQIP hospitals will appear on the dropdown list of hospitals on the request page.

- 2) Once the request is received, the verification process will begin. ACS NSQIP will reach out to NSQIP staff at the hospital to obtain the official approval. A request cannot be granted without this official internal approval.
- 3) If the hospital approves the request, it will be processed and the applicant will be notified via email.
- 4) The applicant will be provided a username, password, and a secure link to download the files. The download window will remain open for 10 days.

### **Collaboration**

Many PUF recipients will ask about sharing the data with collaborators / specialists (e.g., biostatisticians) assisting with the research. We do allow this, and the collaborators also must sign and return the DUA. Once the agreement is signed and returned, the files may be shared. The assisting researcher must maintain junior status on all projects. The original, participating-hospital recipient must remain the lead, primary, or senior investigator on any and all publications, papers, or projects resulting from the data.

## **ACS NSQIP PUF FAQs**

### **When is the PUF released?**

The PUF is typically released every autumn. Each PUF contains the data from the previous calendar year (*Example: the data collected during calendar year 2022 was released in the October 2023 PUF*). Construction of each new PUF cannot begin until after the release of the ACS NSQIP July Semiannual Report (SAR), which contains the cases from the previous calendar year.

### **Will I see my hospital's cases in the PUF?**

Your hospital's submitted cases, within a particular calendar year, will be included in the corresponding year's PUF. However, we do not provide site identification of any cases in the PUF, even for purposes of hospital self-identification. Sites excluded from the July SAR will not see their cases in the PUF. Audit failures or a low follow-up rate would lead to exclusion from the PUF.

### **Is the PUF de-identified?**

To remain Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliant and ensure adherence to contractual non-disclosure agreements with participating sites, all PUF datasets are de-identified as to patient, hospital, performing surgeon, state, region, country, etc.

### **Why are only certain Procedure Targeted PUFs available?**

There are currently Procedure Targeted PUFs for Vascular, Colectomy, Gynecology, Hepatectomy, Hysterectomy, Pancreatectomy, Proctectomy, Thyroidectomy, Esophagectomy, Appendectomy, Hip Fracture, Cystectomy, Nephrectomy, and Prostatectomy. We only provide Procedure Targeted PUFs for procedures with NSQIP-required targeted variables. This means that data for "Targets" without target-specific variables or Targets with optional procedure-specific variables do not appear in Targeted PUFs. As more targeted procedures become required by NSQIP, more Procedure Targeted PUFs will become available.

### **What is the difference between gaining access to the PUF and gaining access to the NSQIP Resource Portal?**

The Resource Portal is the main data collection tool for NSQIP, with some reporting capabilities. Access to the Resource Portal is mainly reserved for Surgical Clinical Reviewers (SCRs), Surgeon Champions, and possibly some hospital administrators. The PUF is a research tool made available to other hospital staff and researchers. The intended purpose of the PUF is to provide researchers at participating sites with a data resource they can use to investigate and advance the quality of care delivered to the surgical patient through the analysis of cases captured by ACS NSQIP.