

The Patient Activation Measure®

Patient activation is described by Hibbard and colleagues¹ as ‘an individual’s knowledge, skill, and confidence for managing their health and health care’. The authors state that people with high levels of activation not only understand their role in the care process and feel able to fulfil that role but are more likely to engage in positive health and self-management behaviours. Previous research has found patient activation to be associated with clinical outcomes, rates of hospitalisation and satisfaction with health services.

According to Hibbard and Cunningham², people with low levels of health activation:

- feel overwhelmed with the task of managing their health
- have little confidence in their ability to have a positive impact on their health
- misunderstand their role in the care process
- have limited problem-solving skills
- have had substantial experience of failing to manage their health, and have become passive in managing their health
- say that they would rather not think about their health.

Hibbard and colleagues developed a measure of patient activation known as the Patient Activation Measure®. It consists of a set of 13 statements and respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement with each using a four-point scale ranging from ‘disagree strongly’ to ‘agree strongly’ scored as 1 to 4. A not applicable option is also included. Scores are calculated for all respondents who answer at least 10 of the 13 questions using a spreadsheet provided by the licensing authority (Insignia Health LLC). This produces scores ranging, theoretically, from 0 to 100, with most falling between 39 and 95³.

Scores are divided into four levels of activation which describe the progression as follows:

- Level 1:** Individuals tend to be passive and feel overwhelmed by managing their own health. They may not understand their role in the care process.
- Level 2:** Individuals may lack the knowledge and confidence to manage their health.
- Level 3:** Individuals appear to be taking action but may still lack the confidence and skill to support their behaviours.
- Level 4:** Individuals have adopted many of the behaviours needed to support their health but may not be able to maintain them in the face of life stressors.

¹ Hibbard, J. H., Mahoney, E. R, Stockard, J., & Tusler, M. (2005). Development and testing of a short form of the Patient Activation Measure’. *Health Services Research*, 40(6), 1918–1930.

² Hibbard JH, Cunningham PJ (2008). ‘How engaged are consumers in their health and health care, and why does it matter?’. *Health System Change Research Briefs*, no 8, pp 1–9.

³ Greene J, Hibbard JH (2011). ‘Why does patient activation matter? An examination of the relationships between patient activation and health-related outcomes’. *J Gen Intern Med* 27(5):520–6.