

# **WHO WORLD HEALTH SURVEY**



## **SURVEY MANUAL**

**World Health Organization 2002**

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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

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### **1. Survey objectives**

Different countries have different health outcomes that are in part due to the way respective health systems perform. Regardless of the type of health system, individuals will have health and non-health expectations in terms of how the institution responds to their needs. In many countries, however, health systems do not perform effectively and this is in part due to lack of information on health system performance, and on the different service providers.

The aim of the WHO World Health Survey is to provide empirical data to the national health information systems so that there is a better monitoring of health of the people, responsiveness of health systems and measurement of health-related parameters.

The overall aims of the survey is to examine the way populations report their health, understand how people value health states, measure the performance of health systems in relation to responsiveness and gather information on modes and extents of payment for health encounters through a nationally representative population based community survey. In addition, it addresses various areas such as health care expenditures, adult mortality, birth history, various risk factors, assessment of main chronic health conditions and the coverage of health interventions, in specific additional modules.

The objectives of the survey programme are to:

1. develop a means of providing valid, reliable and comparable information, at low cost, to supplement the information provided by routine health information systems.
2. build the evidence base necessary for policy-makers to monitor if health systems are achieving the desired goals, and to assess if additional investment in health is achieving the desired outcomes.
3. provide policy-makers with the evidence they need to adjust their policies, strategies and programmes as necessary.

### **2. Sample**

- **Target population**

The target population includes any adult, male or female age 18 or over living in private households. Populations in group quarters, on military reservations, or in other non-household living arrangements will not be eligible for the study. People who are in an institution due to a health condition (such as a hospital, hospice, nursing home, home for the aged, etc.) at the time of the visit to the household will be interviewed either in the institution or upon their return to their household if this is likely within a period of two weeks from the first visit to the household.

- **Interview of respondents**

The interviews will be done face-to-face with the selected respondents in the local language(s), using paper and pencil questionnaires. They are expected to last approximately 90 minutes but the length of the interview will depend on the comprehension and literacy level of the respondent. At some sites an abridged version of the interview will be administered over the telephone. In some specialized settings the interview may be computer assisted.

### **3. Informed consents**

Participation in the survey is voluntary and the respondent can refuse to be interviewed. The interviewer is responsible for explaining what the survey is about, providing all the necessary information, and making sure the respondent understands the implications of his / her participation before giving his / her consent. The information given should be simple and clear and adapted to the respondent's level of understanding.

Consents must be documented by asking the respondents to sign an Informed Consent Forms ( Household Informant Consent Form; Individual Consent Form) before doing the interview. These forms must mention who will be doing the study, the types of questions that will be asked, why the study is being done, and who will have access to the information provided. The interviewer must check that the respondent has read and understood the form before signing, and should offer to go over it with him /her emphasizing the different items mentioned. If the respondent is illiterate or unable to read for himself / herself (e.g. due to a visual impairment), the form will be read and explained to him / her. In cases where it is not appropriate for the respondent to sign the form, the interviewer alone will sign the form.

In cases where the respondent is being dissuaded from, or coerced into, participating in the study by a third party such as a spouse, relative or any other member in the community, the interviewer should make it clear that it is the respondent alone who must decide whether or not s/he wishes to be interviewed.

## **B. INTERVIEWER'S PROFILE**

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### **1. Background and experience**

Interviewers recruited for the interviews may either be nationals or non-nationals, provided they are very familiar with the culture and customs and are fluent in the local language. In some places, the local population may be prejudiced against foreigners and this may affect the response rate. Likewise, gender and age may have to be taken into account and in some circumstances it may be necessary to match the gender of the interviewer to that of the respondent and have elderly respondents interviewed by older interviewers. A respondent may refuse to be interviewed by a young woman half his age, or a husband may not allow his wife to be interviewed by a man unless he is present.

Concerning age, interviewers should be at least 20 years old and should show that they have the necessary skills and maturity for conducting interviews.

The level of education of the interviewer should be at least that of a high school graduate. The interviewer will have to take a training course before going to the field. S/he will also have to have several practice interviews in the presence of a supervisor before going to the field. Previous survey or work experience would be desirable.

### **2. Qualities and skills**

The interviewer should have the following skills:

- Interpersonal and communication skills. The interviewer must have the ability to relate well to others and communicate effectively. Often, the message conveyed is misinterpreted by the receiver and the original meaning is lost. According to estimations, there is usually a 40-60% loss in the transmission of messages. Effective communication involves active listening to what is being expressed verbally and nonverbally.

An active listener should listen to the following things:

- Content of the message. This includes words, facts and ideas.
- Intent of the message. This means listening for the “why” and trying to understand a person’s background, attitudes and behaviour.
- Nonverbal communication. This refers to body language and includes facial expressions, eye movement, posture, gestures and tone of voice.
- Monitoring of nonverbal communication and filters. The speaker must be aware of his own body language and of what he is communicating.
- Listening empathetically and nonjudgementally. This means that the listener must try to see things from the other person’s standpoint without judging what is being said.

Being an active listener will allow the interviewer to be sensitive to the respondent's feelings and attitudes, and assess different situations. In addition, s/he must be trustworthy, treat respondents with respect and dignity and keep information confidential (Figure 1).

- Organizational skills. The interviewer must be a good organizer in order to work efficiently and meet deadlines. S/he must also be flexible, be able to function under pressure and deal with unexpected problems.
- Interviewing skills. The interviewer must know how to do an interview using all the standard interviewing techniques. S/he must complete the questionnaires as well as other documents accurately and in a legible handwriting.

### Figure 1 - QUALITIES OF THE INTERVIEWER

pleasant  
respectful confident  
relaxed patient knowledgeable  
encouraging nonjudgemental empathetic trustworthy genuine



## C. CONTACT PROCEDURES

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### 1. Informing authorities

Before contacting the household, authorities in the country should be officially informed that a survey is going to be conducted. They should receive a letter stating the purpose of the survey, the areas to be covered and the time frame. Authorities such as local leaders may facilitate the work of the interviewers by holding village meetings, informing the population and, most of all, by providing reassurance.

### 2. Contact strategies

A number of strategies can be used to maximize the chances of getting an interview with the respondent.

- **Sending an advance letter and brochure to respondent**

An official letter from the organization doing the survey should be sent to the respondent and should mention the following: purpose of the survey and why it is important, who will be doing it, who is asked to participate, how the interviews will be conducted, voluntary participation, types of questions that will be asked, and confidentiality of data. This will give the respondent time to prepare for the interview. The letter and brochure should be sent three to four days before visiting the household.

- **Follow-up calls and visits**

In order to increase the chances of finding people in their homes it is important to know, whenever possible, the occupation of the respondent as this may help determine when s/he is likely to be absent. A farmer in a rural area will be up very early and may be home around mid-morning, whereas someone who works in an office will be home late evening. If the respondent is not at home, the interviewer should try to find out what is the best time for getting an interview. Visits should be planned and maximized as much as possible by establishing a contact schedule covering different times throughout the week including week-ends. The interviewer should be ready and flexible to do the interview during the first contact. If the time is inconvenient, s/he should make an appointment and come back at a later stage. In order to avoid “no” answers, optional times in the form of open-ended questions should be suggested such as “Do you prefer afternoon or evenings?” or “When are you more available?”.

- **Interviewer’s appearance, behaviour and attitudes**

Studies suggest that people form 90% of their opinion with regard to what they think about someone in the first ninety seconds. The way the interviewer presents himself, such as the clothes s/he wears and how s/he behaves, will have an impact on the chances of getting an interview. Considering that refusals occur within a few minutes, s/he will have to pay attention to his image and behaviour that will give nonverbal cues to others. Someone who is unkempt, with dark glasses and

leather jacket may convey suspicion rather than trust and openness. A person wearing smart clothes and jewellery may be seen as superior and distant and may not encourage the respondent's cooperation. What we look like will, to a certain extent, be a reflection of our values, beliefs and status. The interviewer should blend with the environment and adopt a neutral dress code which is culturally acceptable.

The way the interviewer speaks and the language s/he uses may open or close doors. S/he must present himself and the survey in the best light so the interview is not immediately turned down. After all you need to be quite motivated to give an hour of your time to a total stranger and tell him / her about your private life.

- **Persuasion techniques to increase participation**

Persuasion is the art of telling it well to sell it well. You want to leave the household with a completed questionnaire in hand or with an appointment in your agenda. Even if the interviewer is not successful in getting an interview, persuasion techniques will at least minimize the refusal rate. The interviewer should be polite, pleasant and self-confident, and be well prepared. S/he should stress that s/he is a professional from a legitimate and reputable organization, that the survey is important and that the respondent's participation is valuable. The message to get across is that you want the respondent to be part of the study and you need his assistance. The interviewer needs to be direct and sure of him / herself, and get straight to the point.

- **Say the right things and you'll get the right answers**

- I am glad you are home
- I would like to talk to you for a few minutes
- I will not take much of your time

- **Close-ended questions will get you nowhere**

- Can I come in?
- Is it a good time for you?
- Am I interrupting anything?
- Do you want me to come back later?
- Are you busy?
- Are you available now?

- **Apologies may head straight for refusal**

- I am sorry about calling at such a time
- I hope I am not disturbing you

Do not be put-off by someone's offhand manner such as "what do you want" or "we're busy". Say what you have to say and start the interview.

### 3. Increasing participation

A number of things can be done to minimize refusal:

- **Presentation of self and purpose of visit**  
The interviewer should talk about the survey to anyone who happens to be in the house and not wait for the respondent to appear. Information will reassure people and increase trust.
- **Knowledge of survey**  
The interviewer must know the survey well and what his / her role is. Someone who hesitates will not be convincing and this will affect credibility. The interviewer should anticipate questions, prepare answers and arguments for initial refusals, and deal with any problems that may arise. S/he must also be able to answer any questions that may come up and provide sound information.
- **Listening**  
The interviewer should actively listen to the respondent and try to understand why s/he may not want to be interviewed. Perhaps s/he has called at the wrong time on a respondent who is tired and stressed out, or feeling unwell or who simply had a very bad day. If this is the case, his / her presence will not be welcome. Another respondent may be in the middle of preparing dinner or may have to care for an elderly relative. S/he may also find someone who might be willing to be interviewed but who is dissuaded from participating by a member of the household. The interview must never be forced on anyone and can always be done another day. The respondent may just need some space and may be very happy to cooperate at some other time.
- **Post-contact**  
In case of initial refusal the respondent should be recontacted at a later stage. However, contact calls need to be sufficiently spaced out so that the respondent does not feel pressured and harassed. The chances of success are higher a week or more after the first contact as the respondent has had time to think things over.

➤ **Calling at the best time**

It is an advantage to know who can be found at home and when.

- Mornings for the elderly or hard of hearing
- Early afternoon or early evening for mothers with young children
- Evenings or weekends for working people

### ➤ **Saying the right thing**

Explain why you are recontacting the respondent and before s/he tells you that s/he has “already told you” s/he was not interested in the interview, make sure s/he knows that you remember what s/he said.

- I realize it was not a good time for you the other day.
- I know you have told me that you are not interested but we really need your help and no one can replace you.
- Perhaps I was not clear the other day about what the survey is about and I would like to give you some more information.
- I was in the neighbourhood and thought that we could discuss the survey again.

### ➤ **Giving clear explanations**

Explain to the respondent how important his / her participation is to the study:

- Whatever you tell us is valuable. There are no right or wrong answers
- We are interested in what you have to say
- We need your help and are grateful for the time you can spend with us

#### • **Respondent incentive**

Incentives are often associated with an increased response rate, especially prepaid incentives which are more effective than promised ones. They may be offered either in payment or in kind, such as meals or gifts, as a token of appreciation for the respondent's time and willingness to participate in the study. People who initially refuse to be interviewed may change their minds if they get something in return, but incentives should never be used to persuade or bribe the respondent.

#### • **Confidentiality and anonymity**

The respondent may be more likely to cooperate if s/he knows that whatever information s/he provides will not be disclosed. S/he must be given the assurance that his / her name, address and other personal data will not be known to others, and will be removed from the questionnaire. The answers s/he gives will be only used for research purposes and for writing up a report.

#### • **Privacy**

The respondent should be interviewed in private and preferably in a quiet environment. If no other places are available, the interview will have to be conducted in the same room but some form of privacy should be created to avoid other members of the household overhearing what is said. People may be curious and may be tempted to eavesdrop. If the house is overcrowded, the interview can perhaps be done outside, and a courtyard, a garden or the interviewer's car may be alternative options.

## 4. Dealing with respondents

### 4.1 Reluctant respondents

So far, all the right things have been done to get an interview but they have all failed. Some respondents will come up with all sorts of excuses to avoid the interview. It is then up to the interviewer to simultaneously come up with a battery of replies that will convert a refusal into acceptance (Figure 2). Respondents may not be forced to do an interview but they may be persuaded into doing it if the right approach is used.

- **The “Too busy, not interested” respondent**
  - I realize that you are busy and that is why we need to interview someone like you to represent different people and situations.
  - I can understand why you are not interested but you may find that the interview is a positive experience.
  - I know your time is valuable and that is why we want to do the interview when it is most convenient for you (suggest days/times).
  
- **The “I don’t do surveys” respondent**
  - This survey is very important and is now being carried out in 10 other countries and many people like you are being interviewed. The information you give us will be confidential.
  
- **The “Who are you, what do you want” respondent**
  - I understand that you don’t want to give information to someone you don’t know but I work for (name of organization). You can also check with (name of community leader or other authority) who can tell you about the survey.
  
- **The “Why should I tell you about my private life” respondent**
  - The information you provide will not be disclosed to anyone and will only be used for research purposes.
  - You are free to not answer any questions that will be asked.
  
- **The “Why me” respondent**
  - Your name has been selected randomly and no one can replace you.
  - We are interested in what you have to say and your opinions will be included in research results.
  
- **The “Too old, too sick, can’t hear well” respondent**
  - We are interested in people from all age groups and no one is too old.
  - I am sorry that you are unwell. The best thing is for me to come back some other time (suggest time) when you are feeling better.
  - I will speak louder. Is it better now?
  
- **The “Don’t know” respondent**
  - You don’t need to know anything. We just want to know about your opinions.
  - There are no right or wrong answers and you are the person we want to speak to. We want to speak to no one else.

- **The “I don’t have any health problems” respondent**
  - We want to have everybody’s opinion whether or not you have health problems. If we only to people with health problems, then the results would not be representative of your country.

#### **4.2 Special situations**

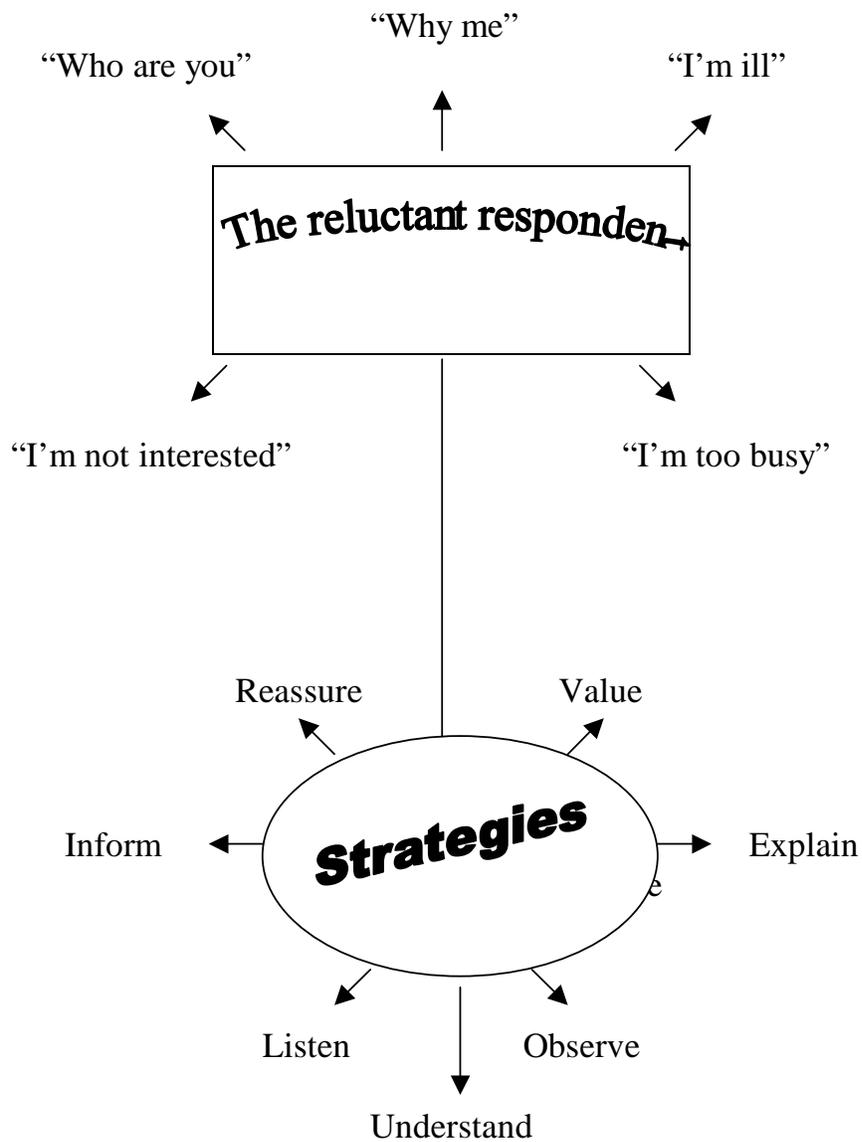
Some situations will need to be given special attention as they may affect cooperation, such as in the case of respondents with cognitive limitations.

Another problem the interviewer may encounter when trying to interview the respondent is the “gatekeeper”. The gatekeeper can be a carer, a relative or a friend and usually acts like a barrier between the interviewer and the respondent. S/he may prevent the respondent from speaking to the interviewer or dissuade him from participating. S/he may also tell the interviewer that the respondent is not interested in the interview or is unable to do it. Therefore, it is important to establish a good rapport with the gatekeepers to ensure their co-operation. In some cases they may even be quite helpful and encourage the respondent to be interviewed. The interviewer should explain the survey to them and listen to what they have to say. The interviewer should also make it clear that they cannot be present during the interview.

**Figure 2 - PERSUASION TECHNIQUES**



to co-operation



A number of things should be kept in mind before doing the interview:

- **Know the survey instrument**  
The interviewer must know well all the survey materials, such as the questionnaire and the question by question specifications. S/he must be able to explain different concepts and refer to definitions where necessary. S/he must also know all the questionnaire conventions and administration procedures.
- **Adopt a non-judgemental attitude**  
Every respondent will understand and answer questions differently, and some respondents make take longer than others. The interviewer must go into the household with an open mind. Before the interview starts s/he should make the respondent feel at ease and try to minimize the differences that might exist. The respondent should never feel patronized or belittled.
- **Have a positive attitude**  
The interviewer must be enthusiastic and positive and feel that what s/he is doing is worthwhile. S/he must remember that the respondent is willing to spend time answering questions and share personal information, so s/he should try to make the interview an enjoyable experience rather than a painful ordeal.

After having established a good rapport with the respondent, the next step is to get a good interview. This can be achieved by following certain interviewing guidelines.

## ANNEX

### I. LETTER TO AUTHORITIES

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## WHO WORLD HEALTH SURVEY

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The (name of institution) in collaboration with the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland, is conducting a “WHO World Health Survey”. This is a community household survey that will be carried out in your country as well as in several other countries over the next months. It focuses on the health of the population, health conditions, disability and provision of health services. The aim of the survey is to examine the way health systems perform and how they respond to the needs of the population.

All the addresses in this area where interviews are to be conducted have been randomly selected through a scientific method, which is nationally representative. Soon, professional interviewers from (name of institution) will start contacting residents in the household to set up interviews. Participation is voluntary and any information provided will be confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Interviewers will be wearing badges and will carry identification cards with the name of the (name of institution). The (name of institution) is a fully accredited institution, which has extensive survey experience.

We hope that this notification letter has answered some of the queries you may have concerning our activity. Please do not hesitate to contact us at (give contact details) if you need further information or any other clarification.

Yours faithfully,

## II. LETTER TO RESPONDENT

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### WHO WORLD HEALTH SURVEY

Dear Resident,

The (name of institution) will soon be conducting a community household survey in your country, as well as in many other countries around the world. This survey will be collecting information on your health and your experience with health care facilities, and how well they have provided services to you and your family.

As described in the enclosed brochure, your household has been selected for this survey through a scientific sampling method that is nationally representative. Your participation is very valuable because the answers you provide will be used to represent other people like you throughout the country. The information provided will not be disclosed to anyone and will only be used for research purposes.

Professional interviewers from (name of institution) will be visiting you over the next few days to tell you about the survey and answer any questions you may have. Your participation is voluntary but we really hope that you will agree to participate in the survey.

We thank you for your assistance and look forward to meeting you.

### **III. SURVEY BROCHURE**

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The purpose of this brochure is to prepare the respondent for the visit of the interviewer so that he knows what the survey is about and what will be expected of him. It should be either sent together with the letter or dropped at the household.

In addition to the survey information provided, the following items should also appear in the brochure:

- Logo of the institution
- Name of project
- Name of institution doing the survey and contact details
- Names of principal investigators

### **Why is this survey important?**

This survey is on health, your health and the health of your family and it directly concerns you. It is a household survey that will be conducted in your community as well as in many other countries around the world. The reason we are doing it is because we want to learn more about your experience with health care institutions, whether positive or negative, and how they have responded to your needs. By health care institutions we mean hospitals, primary health care clinics, health centres and any other place which provides health services.

### **Who is doing the survey?**

This survey will be conducted by a research team from the (name of institution). It is funded by the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, Switzerland, which is an international organization and whose objective it to promote good health and make health care accessible to all people.

### **Who is asked to participate?**

Over (N=) men and women aged 18 years or older, from urban and rural areas in your country have been selected to participate in this survey, and you are one of them. Scientific methods have been used so that the people interviewed represent the population. It is important for you to know that the interviewer has not chosen the household to be contacted or the person to be interviewed. You have been chosen to participate because no other person can represent you.

### **How will the interviews be conducted?**

The interviews will take place in your own home and will be done by professional interviewers who work for the (name of institution). Each interviewer will be wearing a badge and will be carrying an identification card with a photograph. You have the right to check the card and contact the local leader in your area or the institution doing the survey (give contact

details). You can choose the most convenient time to do the interview or can do it when the interviewer first contacts you.

### **Does the selected person have a choice about participating in the survey?**

Yes you have a choice and your participation is voluntary. No one can force you to be interviewed if you refuse. However, this survey will allow you to tell us about your health, your experience with health care institutions and how they can be improved. We need you to be part of this survey and your participation can make a difference.

### **What kinds of questions will be asked?**

The questions are about your present health, what you consider good health, how much you have used health care institutions, and how they have responded to your needs. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions, and each answer is equally valuable.

### **What happens to the answers?**

What you tell us will not be revealed to anyone and will be confidential. This means that your family, relatives or other people will not have access to the information you give us. Once the interviews are completed they will be sent to (name of institution) where you name and address and other personal information will be removed. No one will be able to identify you.

#### IV. INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

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##### A) HOUSEHOLD INFORMANT CONSENT FORM:



### WHO WORLD HEALTH SURVEY

Dear Participant,

You have been identified as the most knowledgeable respondent in your household. We would like to interview you. This survey is conducted by the World Health Organization and will be carried out by professional interviewers from (name of institution). This survey is currently taking place in several countries around the world.

The interview will take approximately 20 minutes. I will ask you questions about:

- Details about members of your household,
- Insurance, expenditures and assets.

The information you provide will only be used to understand the main things that affect peoples' health in different countries.

The information you provide is totally confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone. It will only be used for research purposes. Your name, address, and other personal information will be removed from the questionnaire, and only a code will be used to connect your name and your answers without identifying you. The Survey Team may contact you again only if it is necessary to complete the information at a later point in time.

Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the survey after having agreed to participate. You are free to refuse to answer any question that is asked in the questionnaire. If you have any questions about this survey you may ask me or contact (name of institution and contact details) or (Principal Investigator at site).

Signing this consent indicates that you understand what will be expected of you and are willing to participate in this survey.

Read by Respondent [  ]  
Agreed and Signed [  ]

Read by Interviewer [  ]  
Refused [  ]

Respondent: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

