

ASQ Added to LOINC, Advancing Standardized Suicide Risk Screening Across Health Care

High school student researcher helps bring standardized suicide risk screening to one of health care's most widely used interoperability standards.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, August 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- SPiER, an initiative of Zero Overdose,

announced today that the Ask Suicide-Screening Questions (ASQ) Tool has been approved for inclusion in the August 2026 LOINC® 2.83 release. The addition establishes standardized LOINC codes for the ASQ, making it easier for electronic health records (EHRs), health information exchanges, and other health technologies to exchange suicide risk screening information consistently across care settings.



Developed by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the ASQ is a brief, evidence-based suicide risk screening tool that takes approximately 20 seconds to administer. Widely adopted across health care settings, it enables clinicians to identify individuals who may be at risk for suicide quickly and consistently. With standardized LOINC coding now available, organizations have a stronger foundation for implementing the ASQ at scale while improving documentation and the exchange of critical information across systems.

"The addition of the ASQ is a monumental step forward in seeking to save lives through advances in health care records and systems," said Virna Little, PsyD, LCSW-r, CEO and Co-Founder of SPiER.

LOINC is the standard identifier system for clinical observations and assessments, maintained by Regenstrief Institute and required for laboratory data and screening assessments under federal certification rules. It works by giving every observation a universal code, so receiving systems can interpret incoming data without requiring organizations to manually translate and map data between different systems, a process that is labor-intensive, difficult to maintain, and prone to inconsistencies.

Before this addition, ASQ results were recorded in locally defined fields that varied by organization. A screening completed in an emergency department could reach an outpatient

practice as unstructured text, or not arrive in usable form at all. The result was that a positive screen frequently failed to follow the patient into their next care setting.

Standardized LOINC codes for the ASQ panel, its individual questions, and its response values make that information computable across systems, which is the prerequisite for reliable handoffs, follow-up tracking, and measurement.

Dhruv Saitwal, a junior at Elkins High School, contributed to the ASQ standardization as part of his broader research on the Suicide Safe Care project in collaboration with the HL7 EHR Work Group and SPiER. The project explores how suicide risk information can be made more visible, accessible, and standardized within clinical workflows by using generative AI to identify suicide screening and assessment tools that may benefit from LOINC standardization. Saitwal developed a GenAI-powered retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) approach to analyze more than 600 suicide-related research articles and extract key information about screening and assessment tools, including their use, populations, outcomes, care settings, and study characteristics. This research provides a scalable approach for identifying evidence-based tools that may be candidates for future LOINC submissions, supporting greater data standardization and more consistent access to critical suicide risk information across health care systems.

“By uniting psychology, AI, and health informatics, we identified the world’s most widely used suicide-screening tool and converted it into an interoperable LOINC code set, supporting an ASQ in 23 languages and accessible across EHR systems,” said Dhruv Saitwal. “This single standardized framework removes language barriers and enables global data exchange, ensuring lifesaving care reaches patients precisely when needed.”

“Health care providers have the power to reduce youth suicide by asking questions. The ASQ helps providers start that very difficult but critical conversation with patients,” said Lisa Horowitz, PhD, MPH, Staff Scientist, National Institute of Mental Health and Developer of the Ask Suicide-Screening Questions (ASQ). “Dhruv Saitwal's initiative and drive remind us that one person taking action can save lives.”

The LOINC 2.83 release is expected to be published in August 2026.

About SPiER

SPiER, an initiative of Zero Overdose, brings together health care organizations, electronic health record vendors, interoperability networks, standards organizations, technology partners, researchers, and people with lived experience to strengthen how evidence-based suicide prevention is supported across health care technology. Rather than creating one-off solutions, SPiER advances scalable approaches that help integrate screening, safety planning, risk assessment, care transitions, and follow-up into the systems health care organizations use every day.

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