



Choose the Right Hospital

A TOOLKIT TO FACILITATE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



Frequently Asked Questions About Hospital Compare

Q. Does Hospital Compare rank hospitals?

Unlike some state-based or private hospital quality sites, Hospital Compare does not sort hospitals into categories such as best, average or worse. Nor does it provide answers to such questions as, “What hospital is best if you have a stroke?” Work on composite measures is underway.

Q. Is there any relationship between how many patients a hospital sees and its outcomes?

Research has shown that for some procedures, the number of patients treated at a given hospital is related to the patient outcomes. That is, the idea of “practice makes perfect” may be true, especially for conditions that require the coordinated work of health professional teams—whether they are responding to emergencies or engaged in surgical procedures.

Q. Does Hospital Compare show how well care is coordinated?

Quality measures often look at a snapshot of care such as doing a test or selecting the correct antibiotic. We also know that many patient care issues arise during transitions of care; for example, when following up on test results performed in one setting with a second setting, where the patient is now receiving care. Another transition example is when patients move from hospital to home; at this juncture, consistent medication instructions and records are important. Hospital Compare does not yet have measures of coordination, but this is the subject of current research.

Q. Does trying to improve count?

Quality measures at a single point in time can be useful for consumers and policymakers who are trying to compare health care providers. Accrediting bodies such as the Joint Commission also inspect hospitals periodically. In addition to accreditation status, it is important to know whether hospitals are committed to continuously improving their care and can demonstrate this effort. A culture of safety and improvement can be indicators that hospitals have systems in place to learn about the care they provide. Interest and use of quality information by employers is a powerful incentive to develop such programs.

Q. How often are the data updated on the Hospital Compare website?

A. Process of care, outcomes and HCAHPS patient experience measures are updated on a quarterly basis. The outcomes of care measures and Medicare payment and volume information are updated annually.