

News Release

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***Hospital Compare* Web Site Helps Medicare Beneficiaries Learn More About Local Hospitals**

Albuquerque, NM – Medicare consumers now have the three critical elements—quality information, patient satisfaction survey information, and pricing information for specific procedures—to help make more informed decisions about the quality and value of the health care available to them through local hospitals. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently announced an addition on consumer assessment of hospital care to its *Hospital Compare* Web site.

“CMS recently posted new survey information at the *Hospital Compare* consumer Web site offering consumers more insight about the hospitals in their communities,” said Dan Jaco, chief executive officer of the New Mexico Medical Review Association (NMMRA), the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for New Mexico under contract with CMS to improve the quality of health care in the state. “It is the first time this kind of information has been made publicly available in this way.”

The *Hospital Compare* Web site currently provides information on 26 quality measures, which include process-of-care and outcome measures. Process-of-care measures report how well a hospital provides care, and outcome measures reflect the results of the care that beneficiaries received while in the hospital.

With the addition of the 10 new patient experience-of-care topics, consumers will now be able to get an even better picture of the quality of care delivered at their local hospitals. The patient experience-of-care information on *Hospital Compare* is part of the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) Hospital Survey, known as HCAHPS. It is the first national, standardized, publicly reported survey of patient perspectives on care they experience during a hospital stay.

“This is a significant addition to the arsenal of publicly reported information on provider-specific quality,” added Jaco.

More than 2,500 hospitals around the country have been collecting information from a random sample of discharged patients who were treated for a wide range of conditions between October

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2006 and June 2007. These patients were asked about their experiences of care (including topics such as responsiveness of hospital staff and pain management) and how they rate the hospital overall.

In this first phase of the program, about 50 percent of New Mexico hospitals (19 of 41) voluntarily reported their patient satisfaction results. Beginning July 2007, public reporting of HCAHPS results became required for hospitals to receive their full Annual Payment Update from CMS. These additional data will be reported on *Hospital Compare* in June of 2008.

Jaco also noted that NMMRA applauds those hospitals that stepped forward early to report this data. "It is understandable some hospitals may want to wait another quarter before placing this information in the public domain while reporting is voluntary."

The survey centered on 10 patient experience measures. Patient satisfaction rates in New Mexico appear similar to, although slightly lower than, national rates in most areas. The following table gives state to national comparisons on the average score on 10 HCAHPS composite categories.

Question	New Mexico Average for Patients Responding "Always"	U.S. Average for Patients Responding "Always"
Communication with nurses	69%	73%
Communication with doctors	76%	79%
Responsiveness of hospital staff	59%	60%
Pain management	64%	67%
Communication about medicines	54%	58%
Cleanliness of hospital	65%	68%
Quietness of hospital	51%	54%
Discharge information	76%	79%
Overall rating of hospital	57%	63%
Willing to recommend hospital	60%	67%

While these scores may seem unimpressive on average, it is important to understand that these responses are characterized by "always" or "yes, definitely" answers. When the responses are broadened to include "always" and "usually" or "yes, definitely" and "yes, probably," the percentages are much higher. For example, for the last question above, 92 percent of patients asked about their willingness to recommend the specified hospital said "yes, definitely" or "yes, probably" in New Mexico, compared to 94 percent nationally. Similarly, using a 10-point scale, patients gave the state's hospitals an overall rating of 7 or higher (rather than 9 or higher as is reflected above) 85 percent of the time, compared to 89 percent nationally.

At the individual hospital level, scores vary widely by category and hospitals, with the range of high to low scores between 86 percent and 34 percent when applying the "always" criteria. However, the differences are not usually of that magnitude.

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“Consumers should be cautioned to discount small differences between hospital scores because these may not be real differences due to varying sample sizes and respondent bias,” warned Jaco. “Until another quarter or two of data is included, it is probably premature to try to draw any conclusions on a hospital-specific or even category-specific basis.”

Jaco predicts that the environment will be different in another year. “Hospitals with percentages below 80 percent in any category, and perhaps 90 percent for some categories, will probably be subject to scrutiny by the public and government agencies. As a matter of fact, CMS plans to incorporate HCAHPS rates as part of a pay-for-performance initiative called Value Based Purchasing, which could begin as early as 2009.”

In addition to the new information from patients about their hospital stays, CMS will be providing information about the number of certain elective hospital procedures provided to those patients and what Medicare pays for those services. The new pricing and volume information at *Hospital Compare* looks at the acute care hospital payments Medicare made for treatment of beneficiaries with certain illnesses from October 2005 through September 2006. This information reflects what Medicare pays the hospital for these services, not what beneficiaries pay.

This summer, CMS will add a measure for pneumonia mortality, which will accompany the mortality measures for heart attack and heart failure that are currently posted on the *Hospital Compare* Web site.

The updated information is part of the public health effort to strengthen consumer choice and create incentives to motivate providers to provide better care for all Americans, according to CMS.

To access the *Hospital Compare* Web site, visit www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov.

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