



Well-known Hospitals Fail in New Medicare Ratings



The U.S. government released much-anticipated first overall hospital quality ratings last week with many of the country's best-known facilities receiving below average scores while obscure hospitals were awarded top scores. The Centres for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) rated 3,617 hospitals on a one- to five-star scale. The hospital industry has been angered by this and has been putting pressure on Congress to block the ratings. Hospitals have been vocal in their position saying that such ratings will make places that deal with the toughest cases look poor.

Medicare has taken a firm stance on the issue insisting that consumers need a simple way to objectively gauge quality. Medicare has taken into account the different states of health of patients making comparisons although not to an extent that satisfies some hospitals.

Here are the key figures:

Only 102 hospitals received the top rating of five stars;
Few are considered as the nation's top facilities by private ratings sources such as U.S. News & World Report;
Relatively obscure hospitals received five stars including at least 40 specialists hospitals;
There were more 5-star hospitals in Lincoln, Nebraska and La Jolla, California, than in New York City or Boston;
Memorial Hermann Hospital System in Houston and Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, were two of the nationally known hospitals getting five stars;
Medicare awarded the lowest rating of one star to 129 hospitals;
5 hospitals in Washington, D.C., received just 1 star, including George Washington University Hospital and MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, both of which teach medical residents;
9 hospitals in Brooklyn, 4 hospitals in Las Vegas and 3 hospitals in Miami received only one star;
Some premier medical centres received the second highest rating of 4 stars. In total, 927 hospitals received four stars;
Nearly half the hospitals — 1,752 — received an average rating of three stars.

See Also: [What's in a Star Rating?](#)

However, some Watchdogs praised the ratings system.

"Consumers can use this trustworthy program to compare hospitals side by side. This is a huge step forward," said Debra Ness, president of the National Partnership for Women & Families, a Washington nonprofit. Medicare based the star ratings on 64 individual measures that are published on its Hospital Compare website. These include death and infection rates and patient reviews. Latest techniques to battle cancer and cutting0edge techniques, are not reflected in the ratings Medicare said.

Dr. Kate Goodrich, who oversees Medicare's quality ratings, said the same type of rating system for nursing homes and dialysis centres had been useful to consumers and patients.

Rick Pollack, president of the American Hospital Association described the new ratings as confusing for patients and families.

"Hospitals cannot be rated like movies," Dr. Darrell Kirch, president of the Association of American Medical Colleges said.

Source: [HealthcareITNews](#)

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