



MAKING MEDICARE MAKE SENSE

Answers to Some of the Most Commonly Asked Medicare Questions

Q: What is the new information that can be found on Medicare's Hospital Compare tool to help Americans understand the state of quality at America's hospitals?

A: Important new information about the quality of care available in America's outpatient and emergency departments, including how well hospitals care for patients with heart attacks and protect outpatients from surgical infections was added in July to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) Hospital Compare website at www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov.

This information also can be found on the front page of the new HHS website as part of the Compare Care Quality link at www.healthcare.gov

One of the new pieces of data included, for the first time, is how efficiently facilities use certain types of imaging equipment, and keep Medicare patients safe from exposure to potentially harmful radiation that may not be necessary.

By adding this information to both of these websites we can help patients and their families understand the risks associated with these technologies, and likely encourage them to talk with their doctors about which hospitals are most likely to help patients reduce those risks.

The *Hospital Compare* website also includes new measures that show whether outpatients who are treated for suspected heart attacks receive proven therapies that reduce mortality such as an aspirin at arrival, and how well outpatient surgical patients are protected from infection.

Previously, *Hospital Compare* had provided data only about the quality of care provided to hospital *inpatients*. Consumers have relied on Hospital Compare since 2005 to provide information about the quality of care provided in over 4,700 of America's acute-care, critical access and children's hospitals.

Adding outpatient quality measures to Hospital Compare will give consumers a more complete picture of the quality of care available at local hospitals.

CMS is giving consumers and communities additional insight into the performance of their local hospitals in hopes that this will prompt *all* hospitals to work toward achieving the level of the top-performing hospitals in the country.

The information contained on www.healthcare.gov and www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov is available for consumers to use in making healthcare decisions. However, consumers should gather information from multiple sources when choosing a hospital. For example, patients and caregivers could use the website to help them discuss plans of care with their trusted health care providers. In an emergency situation, patients should always go to the nearest, most easily accessible facility.