

## Mortality Rates Found Lower Among Top-Rated Hospitals

Janice Simmons, for HealthLeaders Media, October 13, 2009

There is a much better chance of dying in a one star rated hospital compared to a five star rated hospital, according to the 12th annual HealthGrades study on Hospital Quality in America released Tuesday.

"Year over year, we've continued to see that not only are our five-star star hospitals better, but they have improved at a much faster rate," said Kristin Reed, one of the study's co-authors from HealthGrades of Golden, CO.

The company annually examined nearly 40 million Medicare hospitalization records—observing patient outcomes among 5,000 of the nation's non-federal hospitals. It reviewed 28 different procedures and treatments for this study—looking at complications and mortality. These findings are available for public review.

According to the current annual study, patients at highly rated hospitals had a 52% lower chance of dying compared with the U.S. hospital average, a "quality chasm" that has continued during the past decade even as mortality rates overall have declined.

Among the other study findings:

- Risk adjusted mortality at the nation's hospitals improved, on average, 10.99% from 2006 through 2008.
- If all hospitals performed at the level of a five star rated hospital across the 17 procedures and diagnoses studied, 224,537 Medicare lives may have been saved from 2006 through 2008.
- Roughly 57% (127,488) of the potentially preventable deaths were associated with four diagnoses: sepsis (44,622); pneumonia (29,251); heart failure (26,374); and respiratory failure (27,241).
- Over the last three years of studies, Ohio and Florida consistently have had the greatest percentage of hospitals in the top 15% for risk adjusted mortality.

As for complications for all procedures studied, patients faced a 80% lower chance of experiencing one or more in hospital complications in a five star rated hospital compared to a one star rated hospital. In addition, there was a 61.22% lower chance of experiencing one or more in hospital complications in a five star rated hospital when compared to the nationwide average.

The report also noted this year that Joint Commission stroke certified hospitals were almost twice as likely to attain five star status in stroke (30% of certified hospitals were five star versus about 16% of non certified) while fewer of the stroke certified hospitals fell into the one star category (12% versus 20%).

Overall, Joint Commission stroke certified hospitals had an 8% lower risk adjusted mortality rate compared to hospitals that were not stroke certified.

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[Back](#)