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HQA Adds Enhanced Hospital Quality Information to “Hospital Compare” Web Site

Data added on mortality for certain heart conditions, steps taken to improve surgical care

WASHINGTON (June 21, 2007) – Today, the Hospital Quality Alliance (HQA) announced that it will add enhanced hospital quality information to its public “Hospital Compare” Web site (www.HospitalCompare.hhs.gov).

Now, for the first time ever, the public will be able to see how a hospital’s performance compares to the national mortality rate for two common heart conditions. Additionally, the HQA will add more comprehensive information about steps taken to prevent surgical infections and pneumonia.

The addition of these new data reflects the HQA’s continuing commitment, since 2002, to publicly report meaningful, useful hospital quality of care information to help patients and consumers make more informed decisions about hospital care.

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Currently, information on Hospital Compare allows patients and consumers to see how many times hospitals provide important treatments for heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia and surgical patients. The new information will allow consumers to find out how heart attack and heart failure patients fared 30 days after being admitted to a hospital, including time spent outside the hospital after being discharged. Hospitals will be placed in one of three categories based on their performance in relation to a national rate – “no different than the U.S. national rate”, “better than the U.S. national rate” or “worse than the U.S. national rate” – in order to provide clear, understandable language to patients and consumers.

Until now, such specific mortality information has not been available. It differs from previous federal efforts in that the mortality information measures two specific conditions only, uses a new methodology and has been endorsed by the National Quality Forum (NQF), a national consensus standards-setting body. The new methodology is more sophisticated and uses one year of medical history from billing information to adjust for differences in patients’ health, a process known as risk adjustment. While no method is perfect, this risk adjustment is the best method currently available and is intended to provide for reliable comparisons of outcomes across hospitals.

The mortality data join a growing collection of clinical care information on the Hospital Compare Web site that attempts to improve consumer education about quality of care. The HQA will continue to build the Web site with an expanded range of information, including the following:

- Patient experience of care data containing consumer insight about nurse and physician performance and responsiveness, hospital cleanliness and noise levels, pain control and discharge planning

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- Expanded information about surgical care, including steps taken to prevent blood clots, surgical site infections and post-surgical complications
- Pediatric asthma treatment – the first standardized information specifically regarding children’s care
- Prevention of infections and other complications of care in intensive care and other critical care units

The HQA chose these measures because they assess the care provided to patients suffering from common conditions that cause patients to be admitted to a hospital. To ensure standardization, the HQA only chooses measures that have been endorsed by the NQF.

The HQA is a voluntary public-private initiative that includes hospitals, physicians, nurses, federal agencies, quality experts, consumer and business groups. HQA members collaborate to improve the quality of care provided by the nation’s hospitals by measuring and publicly reporting information about this care. The goal of the HQA is to collect and report data on a robust set of standardized and easy-to-understand hospital quality measures.

More than 4,000 hospitals – including virtually all acute care hospitals – have voluntarily submitted quality information to share with the public on the initial set of conditions – heart attack, heart failure and pneumonia. The HQA is continuing its efforts to determine useful information to include on the Hospital Compare Web site in the future.

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About Hospital Compare

Hospital Compare is the result of the cooperation of members of the Hospital Quality Alliance, a landmark public-private partnership of hospitals, government agencies, quality experts, purchasers, consumer groups and other health care organizations. These organizations have joined together to develop a shared national strategy for hospital quality measurement and are committed to advancing quality of care. The Hospital Quality Alliance created the site – www.HospitalCompare.hhs.gov – to provide quality of care information to the public in a consistent, unified way. For more information about the HQA and its partners, please visit www.hospitalqualityalliance.org.

What members of the Hospital Quality Alliance are saying about the new information:

John Rother, AARP Director of Public Policy: “Making information widely available is a powerful way to change behavior. AARP is convinced that as we continue to provide valid and reliable information on how providers and hospitals provide care, we can expect to see better, more informed decision-making by clinicians and consumers. With the addition of new measures, Hospital Compare is becoming a richer, more useful source of information for consumers and patients.”

Gerry Shea, Assistant to the President for Governmental Affairs of the AFL-CIO:

“Publication of mortality rates within 30 days of a patient's admission to a hospital following a common heart procedure is another milestone in the quest for relevant information for consumer decision-making in healthcare. This is the first time that the national hospital reporting website, Hospital Compare, is making available data on the outcome of care received in hospitals. It marks the beginning of a new and exciting phase in hospital reporting on quality of care that will be immensely beneficial to families and their physicians.”

Carolyn M. Clancy, Director, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: “AHRQ’s 2006 National Healthcare Quality Report clearly shows that public reporting initiatives like Hospital Compare are making a difference in the quality of health care. The report found that publicly reported measures for hospital care for heart attack patients and pneumonia patients improved 15 percent and 11.7 percent, respectively. The data on Hospital Compare, combined with forthcoming measures of patients’ experience with hospital care, will give consumers a robust picture of hospital care in this country.”

Rich Umbdenstock, President and CEO of the American Hospital Association: “Getting useful information about hospital quality into the hands of consumers is the goal of the Hospital Quality Alliance – and it’s a goal hospitals are committed to. Equally important is sharing this data with hospitals so physicians and nurses can review the information and improve how they deliver care. Through this important effort, hospitals are voluntarily making more information about quality publicly available. That’s good for patients and families.”

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J. James Rohack, M.D., American Medical Association Board Member: “The American Medical Association continues its longstanding work to improve medical care in the United States. We support the efforts of the HQA to provide meaningful information through Hospital Compare to allow patients to make informed choices.”

Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR, President of the American Nurses Association: “The American Nurses Association applauds the inclusion of additional data into Hospital Compare which provide information regarding outcomes over time. As an OR nurse I am particularly pleased with the inclusion of expanded information about surgical care, including steps to prevent blood clots.”

Karen Ignani, President and CEO of America’s Health Insurance Plans: “From our experience with health plan performance measures, we know that public reporting helps consumers make choices, and gives providers and plans the information they need to make improvements. The goals are to set a higher bar for health care quality and to make the system more transparent. Each step we take gets us closer to achieving these important goals for health care.”

Robert Dickler, Senior Vice President of the Association of American Medical Colleges Division of Health Care Affairs: “This additional data on patient outcomes will make the Hospital Compare Web site an even more effective resource for consumers, as well as providers. Our member institutions are pleased to be a part of this ongoing effort and look forward to providing more information to patients on the quality of their care in the future.”

Allan Korn, M.D., Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer, Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association: “The new data on the Hospital Compare Web site represent another significant step forward in the HQA’s efforts to provide consumers with meaningful and useful hospital quality of care information. Through the information now available, consumers are increasingly able to make more informed decisions about their healthcare options.”

Leslie V. Norwalk, Esq., Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Acting Administrator: “The improvements we’re announcing today represent major steps in our drive to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries receive better care at a lower cost. And the key to success is the teamwork approach brought to this effort by our partners in HQA.”

Chip Kahn, President of the Federation of American Hospitals: “Consumers and patients deserve to have meaningful information about the quality of care delivered in hospitals. The release of mortality information reflects hospitals’ ongoing commitment to publicly reporting data that will help people make informed choices about their care.”

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Robert Galvin, M.D., Director of Global Health for General Electric Company: “Providing consumers with meaningful information about the quality of inpatient care is a critical step in assisting patients in making informed health decisions. The federal government and hospitals should be commended for publishing credible mortality data. While this is a significant step forward, there is more work to be done to ensure that consumers can access all the data on the performance of all providers they care about.”

Dennis S. O’Leary, M.D., President of The Joint Commission: “The release of these data through Hospital Compare will further enhance hospital-based quality improvement efforts, and inform and benefit patients as well. The Joint Commission is committed to making credible, high-quality, performance information publicly available, and to working with the Hospital Quality Alliance and CMS to further this goal.”

Lawrence McAndrews, President and CEO of the National Association of Children’s Hospitals and Related Institutions: “The addition of risk-adjusted mortality data to Hospital Compare further expands the amount of information available to patients and families to make important hospital care decisions. We also look forward to the future addition of measures for pediatric asthma treatment.”

Larry S. Gage, President of the National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems: “We feel strongly that the public has a right to know how well hospitals are performing. NAPH supports efforts to provide meaningful quality information to patients as well as to improve the quality of hospital care across the country.”

Janet Corrigan, President and CEO of the National Quality Forum (NQF): “Patients, providers and health care professionals will benefit greatly from the availability of this new information on patient outcomes. The Hospital Compare Web site is becoming a rich source of information to support informed patient decision-making and efforts to improve quality.”

Thomas J. Donohue, President and CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce: “The Chamber strongly supports the Hospital Quality Alliance and its efforts to improve the quality of our health delivery system through facilitating development and dissemination of hospital quality data. Disclosure of hospital mortality data for common heart conditions promotes a health care system where consumers can make better-educated decisions about their health care options.”

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