

# HealthGrades 2011 Healthcare Consumerism and Hospital Quality in America Report

The internet has dramatically increased the ability of the average patient to find credible information and make more informed healthcare decisions. According to the Pew Internet Project, 59% of all adults in the United States look for health information online. Increasingly, patients are moving from searching for disease or treatment information to using the internet to find quality information on doctors and hospitals (47% and 38%, respectively).<sup>1</sup> This trend is considerably different from 2003, when only 21% of internet users reported looking for information on a specific doctor or hospital.<sup>2</sup>

Since 1998, HealthGrades has been encouraging patients to research and arm themselves with meaningful information in order to fully participate in their healthcare experience. HealthGrades supports patients by providing quality ratings on nearly 5,000 U.S. hospitals and profiles on more than 800,000 physicians nationwide. Every month HealthGrades receives 11 million unique visitors to our website seeking this type of information.

Each year, HealthGrades releases a comprehensive evaluation of hospital care using 40 million hospital records obtained from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. This study, the largest of its kind, establishes quality ratings for each hospital based on risk-adjusted rates of mortality and in-hospital complications in 27 procedures and diagnoses. For each procedure and diagnosis, hospitals are assigned a 5-star (best), 3-star (as expected) or 1-star (poor) rating. Ratings for all hospitals are available at [www.HealthGrades.com](http://www.HealthGrades.com).

In conjunction with this annual report of hospital quality, HealthGrades also evaluated some of the characteristics of the patients visiting our site. For example, which cities have the most unique visitors to the HealthGrades website? Who are these patients (by demographic characteristics) and what are they looking for? The conclusions drawn from this study and research confirm what other studies have shown: patients want access to quality information and are actively seeking this information to guide their healthcare decisions.

Finally, HealthGrades reported on overall quality of hospital care in 195 Designated Market Areas (DMA®) as defined by the Nielsen Company. Only markets with greater than 100,000 persons, according to the Nielsen Company's "total persons per household" definition, and at least three hospitals rated by HealthGrades were included. These market summaries are found in the accompanying *HealthGrades 2011 Hospital Quality Market Summaries*.

## Why Choosing a Highly Rated Hospital Matters

All hospitals are not the same. Variation in quality is a well-established fact. For this reason, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services began launching initiatives in 2001 to improve the quality of care provided to Medicare recipients. Furthermore, one of the main initiatives under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act signed into law in 2010 is to design systems to reward quality outcomes.

Several studies have shown that the nations' hospitals are improving since these initiatives began. HealthGrades found a 13% improvement in unadjusted in-hospital mortality rates from 2008 to 2010 across 18 diagnoses and procedures.

However, even with national improvements, variation continues to exist from hospital to hospital. HealthGrades found that patients have a more than 73% lower risk of dying in the highest-rated versus the lowest-rated hospitals. If all Medicare patients from 2008 through 2010 had been treated at 5-star hospitals, 240,040 lives could have potentially been saved.

<sup>1</sup> Fox, Susannah. Health Topics Rep. Washington, D.C: Pew Internet, 2011. Print.

<sup>2</sup> Fellows, Deborah; Fox, Susannah. Internet Health Resources Rep. Washington D.C. Pew Internet, 2003. D.C.

## WHY QUALITY MATTERS

Five-star rated hospitals, as a group, had higher quality than all other hospitals.

Across 18 procedures and diagnoses for which mortality rates were studied a typical patient had a:

**73%**

**lower risk of dying in a 5-star rated hospital compared to a 1-star rated hospital, and a**

**54%**

**lower risk of dying in a 5-star rated hospital compared to the national average**

Across 9 common procedures for which complication rates were studied a typical patient was:

**63%**

**less likely to experience in-hospital complications than patients at 1-star programs, and had a**

**43%**

**lower chance of developing an in-hospital complication than the national average**

If all Medicare patients from 2008 through 2010 had been treated at 5-star hospitals:

**240,040**

**lives could have potentially been saved**

If all Medicare patients from 2008 through 2010 had gone to 5-star hospitals for their procedure

**164,472**

**in-hospital complications could have potentially been avoided**

## FIND HIGH-QUALITY HOSPITALS IN YOUR AREA

Find and compare the quality of hospitals in your community at [www.HealthGrades.com](http://www.HealthGrades.com).

## How HealthGrades Determined the Best-Performing Hospitals

Unlike other hospital quality studies, HealthGrades evaluated hospitals solely on clinical outcomes: risk-adjusted mortality and in-hospital complications. HealthGrades analyzed approximately 40 million Medicare discharges from almost every U.S. hospital from 2008 through 2010.

Risk-adjusted mortality and complication rates were calculated and hospitals were assigned a 5-star (best), 3-star (as expected), or 1-star (poor) quality rating for 27 procedures and diagnoses from heart failure to hip replacement to pneumonia.

All star ratings by individual hospitals can be found at [www.HealthGrades.com](http://www.HealthGrades.com).

**Table 1. Procedures and Diagnoses by Specialty Area**

Mortality-Based Procedures and Diagnoses by Specialty Area		
<b>Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Repair</b>	<b>Critical Care</b>	<b>Heart Attack</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resection/Replacement Abdominal Aorta</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pulmonary Embolism</li> <li>Diabetic Acidosis and Coma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heart Attack</li> </ul>
<b>Cardiac Surgery</b>		<b>Heart Failure</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heart Bypass Surgery</li> <li>Valve Repair/Replacement Surgery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sepsis</li> <li>Respiratory Failure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heart Failure</li> </ul>
<b>Coronary Intervention</b>	<b>Gastrointestinal</b>	<b>Neurosurgery</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coronary Interventional Procedures (Angioplasty, Stent)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bowel Obstruction</li> <li>Gastrointestinal Bleed</li> <li>Gastrointestinal Surgeries and Procedures</li> <li>Pancreatitis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neurosurgery</li> </ul>
		<b>Pulmonary</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pneumonia</li> <li>Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease</li> </ul>
		<b>Stroke</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stroke</li> </ul>
Complication-Based Procedures and Diagnoses by Specialty Area		
<b>Joint Replacement</b>	<b>Spine Surgery</b>	<b>Other Vascular Procedures</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total Hip Replacement</li> <li>Total Knee Replacement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Back and Neck Surgery (with Spinal Fusion)</li> <li>Back and Neck Surgery (without Spinal Fusion)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peripheral Vascular Bypass</li> <li>Carotid Surgery</li> </ul>
Other Procedures Evaluated on HealthGrades.com (not included in market summaries)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hip Fracture Treatment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prostatectomy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cholecystectomy (Gallbladder Surgery)</li> </ul>

The complete *HealthGrades Hospital Reports Cards™ Mortality and Complications Methodology* can be found at [www.HealthGrades.com](http://www.HealthGrades.com).

## Patient Characteristics: Determining the Cities with the Most Unique Visitors

Each month, HealthGrades receives 11 million unique visitors to its website. These individuals represent the emerging patient in healthcare: empowered and participatory.

In this report, HealthGrades determined the cities with the highest per capita use of our website. Site traffic from January through July 2011 was monitored to determine the markets with the most unique visitors per capita. Search traffic was then aggregated to Designated Market Areas as defined by The Nielsen Company.<sup>3</sup>

Search traffic was converted to a per capita number using The Nielsen Company “total persons per household” definition, which includes individuals over the age two. Only markets greater than 100,000 persons and at least three hospitals rated by HealthGrades were included.

<sup>3</sup> The DMA information is used pursuant to a license from The Nielsen Company. Any use and/or reproduction of these written materials without the express written consent of The Nielsen Company is strictly prohibited. The DMA information is valid from 2010 to 2011.

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## Top 50 Cities for Patient Web Use

Active and empowered patients were measured as patients actively searching for healthcare providers on HealthGrades.com. The top 50 cities (by Designated Market Area) for unique visitors per capita were:

Table 2. Top 50 Cities for Patient Web Use

1. Washington, DC	26. Columbus, OH
2. New York, NY	27. Oklahoma City, OK
3. Kansas City, MO	28. Louisville, KY
4. Seattle - Tacoma, WA	29. Indianapolis, IN
5. Boston, MA	30. Phoenix - Prescott, AZ
6. Philadelphia, PA	31. Nashville, TN
7. Gainesville, FL	32. Peoria, IL
8. Dallas - Ft. Worth, TX	33. Detroit, MI
9. Atlanta, GA	34. Ft. Meyers, FL
10. Baltimore, MD	35. Montgomery - Selma, AL
11. Chicago, IL	36. Santa Barbara, CA
12. Hartford-New Haven, CT	37. Lancaster, PA
13. Rochester, NY	38. Cleveland, OH
14. Syracuse, NY	39. Portland, ME
15. Austin, TX	40. Raleigh-Durham, NC
16. Providence, RI	41. Baton Rouge, LA
17. Albany, NY	42. Houston, TX
18. Denver, CO	43. Eugene, OR
19. Cincinnati, OH	44. Portland, OR
20. Richmond, VA	45. Omaha, NE
21. Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL	46. West Palm Beach, FL
22. Miami-Ft. Lauderdale, FL	47. San Diego, CA
23. San Francisco-Oakland, CA	48. Columbia, SC
24. Pittsburgh, PA	49. Champaign-Springfield, IL
25. St. Louis, MO	50. Jackson, MS

## What Do Patients Want?

In a 2010 survey<sup>4</sup> of 14,075 patients on HealthGrades.com:

- 66.8% indicated they want access to more quality information
- 93.8% indicated they will go out of their way to seek care at a more highly rated hospital
- 64.9% said they would be willing to pay more out of pocket to seek care at a more highly rated hospital.

Healthcare consumers want choice and they want information to make informed decisions about where to receive their care. For this reason, HealthGrades hospital ratings and information in this study will help them exercise their choice when selecting the right hospital for themselves or their family members.

<sup>4</sup> HealthGrades Consumer Survey, December 2010.

<sup>5</sup> comScore, August 2011; Google Ad Planner, July 2011; Stax, Inc., *Assessing Objectives & Actions Taken Among Users of HealthGrades*, April 2011.

## WHO ARE HEALTHGRADES VISITORS?

Visitors to HealthGrades<sup>5</sup>:

are typically between the ages of  
**25 to 54**

Of these visitors to HealthGrades:

**93%**

have health insurance

**46%**

have post-secondary education

**63%**

are female

**50%**

have household incomes  
greater than \$75,000

## WHEN ARE CONSUMERS VISITING HEALTHGRADES?

Consumers are turning to HealthGrades at a point in time when they need care.

**82%**

plan to seek health services  
within 30 days

**91%**

plan to seek health services  
within 60 days

## WHAT ARE CONSUMERS CONCERNED ABOUT?

Consumers told us:

**80%**

are very or somewhat concerned about  
the quality of hospital care in their  
community

**42%**

believe their chances of experiencing an  
unexpected death or complication is  
higher in some hospitals in their  
community compared to others.

## Tips for Getting the Best Hospital Care

Most of us will require hospitalization for a medical condition at some point in our life. Which hospital will you choose? Your chances of emerging alive and well may depend on your decision. If you're like many Americans, you typically go wherever your doctor recommends. But you have a choice, and it is vital that you exercise it.

### Consider Hospital Quality Measures When Selecting a Hospital

Not all hospitals provide the same level of quality care for the same condition. In fact, you have a more than 73% lower risk of dying in the best versus the worst hospitals. There are many quality measures that can help you choose the best hospital for you:

- **Patient safety**—In its simplest form, a hospital patient safety event is a medical error that was directly caused by the hospital (e.g., medical instrument left in the body after a procedure) or the hospital failed to take the necessary steps to prevent it (e.g., infection). Patient safety is often measured separately from other quality measures because it applies to all diseases, conditions and procedures. In addition, patient safety is the responsibility of every hospital staff member, from doctors to laboratory technicians.
- **Process of care measures**—Process measures focus on how often a hospital provides treatments that are known to get the best results for adult patients with medical conditions, such as heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia, and surgical procedures.
- **Outcome measures**—Clinical outcome measures look at the end result. Outcome measures include measures such as mortality and complication rates while in the hospital and even re-admission rates. HealthGrades evaluates hospitals on clinical outcomes: risk-adjusted mortality and in-hospital complications.

Learn more about these measures and see how your hospital rates, at [www.HealthGrades.com](http://www.HealthGrades.com).

## How to Get the Most from Your Doctor

### Establish a Partnership with Your Doctor

Establishing a good working relationship with your doctor can make a difference in your health and the health of your family. Make sure you:

- **Choose a doctor with whom you are comfortable talking.** Your doctor may be helping you make life and death decisions, so you must feel that your doctor cares about you, listens to you, answers your questions, and helps you understand. You should not feel afraid to discuss anything with your doctor or feel intimidated in any way.
- **Talk with your doctor about your values and preferences regarding care.** Do you prefer to try more conservative therapies first? Do you wish to complement traditional therapies with alternative therapies? Will your doctor support your preferences?
- **Find a doctor who supports your information needs.** If you prefer to be well informed about your condition, find a doctor who will provide additional resources for you and who will allow time during your appointment for you to ask questions.
- **Talk with your doctor about how involved you wish to be in making decisions.** Do you want to know all your options before making a decision? Does your doctor support you seeking a second opinion?

Research doctors in your area at [www.HealthGrades.com](http://www.HealthGrades.com).

### When Considering a Procedure

- Ask your provider how many of these procedures he or she has performed.
- Ask about known complications and common complications your physician has experienced with other patients. Ask about your risk for complications and how your doctor plans to minimize or prevent those risks.
- Ask about who else will be a part of your care when you are in the hospital, and who will be responsible for coordinating your care in the hospital. Poor communication among multiple providers can lead to preventable patient safety events.

## 10 STEPS TO GET THE BEST HOSPITAL CARE

What practical steps can you take to get the best care during your hospitalization? There are two main elements to a safe and effective hospital encounter: **preparation** and **vigilance**.

### Prepare

An effective hospital visit begins before you enter through the double doors:

1. **Identify the best hospitals** in your area specific to your condition or procedure at [www.HealthGrades.com](http://www.HealthGrades.com).
2. **Know what to expect** before, during, and after your procedure by asking questions of your doctor and care team.
3. **Always have an updated list** of your medications, allergies, and medical history on hand.
4. If you have an **advanced directive**, bring it with you to the hospital.
5. **Plan ahead for the day** of your procedure so you minimize stress and maximize vigilance.

### Stay Vigilant

In the hospital, be attentive to the details of your care:

6. **Have an advocate**, such as a friend or family member, **with you** whenever possible to ensure your care is safe and according to plan.
7. **Ask questions about your care plan** and about each medication or procedure before it is administered.
8. **Make sure staff uses your name and checks your ID band** before you receive any treatment, to avoid patient mix-ups.
9. **Pay attention to staff hygiene**, ensuring hands are washed or in a clean pair of disposable gloves before they touch you.
10. **Make a follow-up appointment** with your doctor to ensure you recover and rehabilitate optimally after your discharge from the hospital.