



## **HealthGrades Annual Study Talking Points (External)**

### **What is today's News?**

- HealthGrades, the nation's most trusted, independent source of physician information and hospital quality outcomes, today released the *HealthGrades 2011 Consumerism and Hospital Quality in America* report and quality ratings on the nation's nearly 5,000 hospitals. The report for the first time:
  - Identifies the nation's Top 50 Cities for Patient Web Use, based on unique visits per capita to HealthGrades.com during the past year.
  - Lists the Top 5 Most Searched Medical Specialties, by market, among patients seeking providers online.
  - Includes local Healthy Cities Hospital Quality section highlighting the overall quality of care for 197 markets nationwide, with corresponding web portal for patients

### **What are key findings of the *HealthGrades 2011 Consumerism and Hospital Quality in America* report?**

- Patients had, on average 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.
- Patients had, on average, were 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.
- In an online survey, 80% of HealthGrades visitors said they are very or somewhat concerned about the quality of hospital care in their community.
- In an online survey, 42% of HealthGrades visitors said that they believe their chances of experiencing an unexpected death or complication is higher in some hospitals in their community compared to others.

- It is more important than ever for you to communicate your local quality achievements directly to your media contacts through your press releases, hospital web site and social media
- It is important for you to leverage HealthGrades story to focus attention on your hospital's achievements by emphasizing how your hospital's quality stands out in your market

### **How does HealthGrades rate hospitals?**

Unlike other hospital quality studies, HealthGrades evaluated hospitals solely on clinical outcomes: risk-adjusted mortality and in-hospital complications. Hospitals cannot opt in or out of being rated. 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) . Details on HealthGrades' hospital quality ratings methodology and registration for methodology seminars can be found at <http://www.healthgrades.com/business/library/ratings-methodology.aspx> .

### **What is HealthGrades?**

HealthGrades is America's most trusted, independent source of physician information and hospital quality outcomes. HealthGrades online properties are the nation's leading destination for physician search and empower more than 170 million consumers annually to make informed health care decisions.

### **TOUGH QUESTIONS**

#### **How is this award/rating determined?**

- Hospitals that are 5-star rated have risk adjusted mortality or complication rates that are amongst the lowest in the country.
- Recipients of the Specialty Excellence Award comprise hospitals that have risk-adjusted mortality/complication rates that place them amongst the top 10% in the nation.
- To put it simply, people are more likely to have successful treatment without major complications, on average, at hospitals in this category.

- In its most recent study report, issued on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011 HealthGrades found that on average patients being treated at 5-star rated hospitals have a 73% lower likelihood of dying and are 63% less likely to experience an in-hospital complication.
- This analysis includes all 5,000 hospitals in the United States that treat Medicare patients.

### **How is HealthGrades Funded? How do you make your money?**

- HealthGrades is a privately held organization. We have a variety of different business solutions for hospitals. You can find more information about our services by visiting the About Us section of our website at [www.healthgrades.com](http://www.healthgrades.com).

### **How is this different than US News and World Report?**

- HealthGrades star ratings are based solely on clinical quality outcomes. US News and World Report's award contains a variety of different types of measures including things such as technologies and reputation.
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### **How is this different than Solucient's 100 Top Hospitals?**

- HealthGrades star ratings are based solely on clinical quality outcomes. Solucient's award contains a variety of different types of quality, financial and operational measures.
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### **What does this mean for consumers?**

- HealthGrades found that there is a wide chasm in quality between the top hospitals and others. HealthGrades found that patients being treated at five-star hospitals are, on average, 73% less likely to face in-hospital mortality, and 63% less likely to suffer from an in-hospital complication.
- For consumers, this means that they should do their research before checking into a hospital, at Web sites like HealthGrades and the federal government's Hospital Compare Web site.

### **Do hospitals pay for their ratings?/The competitor across the street told me that hospitals pay for their ratings, is that true?**

- No. HealthGrades rates every nonfederal hospital in the country. No hospitals pay for the ratings and hospitals cannot opt-in or opt-out of being rated. The ratings for all hospitals not affiliated with the federal government (such as the VA system) are available free to the public at [www.healthgrades.com](http://www.healthgrades.com).

**Does *HOSPITAL* pay HealthGrades in any way?**

- HealthGrades provides a variety of business solutions to hospitals. Similar to any relationship, the details are between the two parties involved.

**Why don't you let everyone publicize their ratings?**

- Our ratings are free to patients on our website. However, similar to your industry (media), there is a fee to license the information for commercial and business purposes.

**You mentioned that HealthGrades uses Medicare data in your ratings, is this representative of a hospital's quality?**

- Yes. In the diagnoses and procedures we rate, Medicare comprises anywhere from 60% to 90% of the hospital admissions. Medicare patients represent the sickest patients in these diagnoses and procedures. Thus, rating a hospital on its most vulnerable population. If a hospital does well with its most vulnerable patients, then it is likely that they do well with the other patients in these diagnoses and procedures.

**Why do you use old Medicare data?**

- Currently Medicare is the only publicly available data source for all hospitals. The data set that we use represents the most currently available. While there is a lag in the data, past performance is the best predictor of future performance.

**The competitor across the street told me they won't work with you because you have black box methodology.**

- We actually publish our white paper methodology on our site. I am happy to send that to you. We also conduct several webinars throughout the year explaining exactly how we derive our ratings. These webinars are conducted free of charge to the participant. Anyone is welcome to attend.

**Do hospitals that pay you get to give you data?**

- In the ratings process, there is no exchange from any hospital directly to HealthGrades. HealthGrades only uses data obtained directly from Medicare.

**How do other hospitals compare?/What are the COMPETITOR HOSPITAL'S ratings/rankings?**

- *HOSPITAL* is fortunate to have nationally recognized health care right here. *HOSPITAL* stands out for its consistent quality care. For the specifics regarding *COMPETITOR HOSPITAL* and all other facilities, I refer you to the HealthGrades' websites.

**You mentioned that HOSPITAL is ranked #X in the state, region, etc. I couldn't find that information on your website, can you share that with me.**

- Yes, I can share that information with you. Let's talk offline about the specifics. (NOTE: prepare all clients when using ANY rankings information that if asked by a reporter, we will provide rankings information. We cannot remain objective if we do not.).

**We looked into your ratings and identified a 1-Star rating for X COHORT for HOSPITAL. Can you comment on that?**

- Yes, in our analysis, *HOSPITAL* does have a 1-star in that area. All hospitals have areas of strength as well as opportunities to improve. For specific comments regarding the hospital's approach to both their strengths and weaknesses, I am going to direct you to their spokesperson. (NOTE: be sure to prepare your hospital spokesperson to address these issues)

**On your website, this hospital had 1 5-star rating and 2 3-star ratings for this procedure. How can they say they are 5-star rated?**

- According to how HealthGrades rates hospitals, if they have at least a 5-star rating and no 1-stars in any of the three time periods considered, HealthGrades considers that hospital 5-star rated.
- When a hospital achieves a 5-star rating in any time period they are an outlier, meaning they are in the top 10-15% of the nation. If a hospital has achieved this quality rating we want the consumer to be able to identify this hospital as having quality in this particular service line, no matter the time period.

**What is it that this hospital is doing that makes them so good?**

- Our ratings measure the comparative outcomes of hospitals. HOSPITAL is clearly committed to quality to achieve these results. For specifics about their quality programs, I am going to direct you to their spokesperson. (NOTE: be sure to prepare your hospital spokesperson to have talking points around this).

**You claim this hospital is among the best in the nation but there was a story in the paper a month or so about a patient that died/developed an infection/had disastrous outcome at this hospital. How can that be?**

- HealthGrades compares millions of records in its evaluation. While I can't speak to any specifics of the case you mentioned, one case does not necessarily represent a trend of poor quality.