

## Impact of Hospital Compare Star Ratings on Patients

**Patients may be misled by the Hospital Compare Overall Star Ratings. They reward those hospitals that report the fewest quality measures and do not account for either important sociodemographic factors that affect health and health outcomes, or the complexity of a patient's medical conditions that different hospitals treat.**

- Analysis of the data shows that the fewer metrics a hospital reported on, the more likely they would be to receive more stars. In fact, hospitals that reported on 60 percent of the metrics or less received almost half of the five-star ratings and fared significantly better than larger, more experienced hospitals. This is contrary to everything we know about quality.
- For example, many urban hospitals that provide stellar patient care and pioneer groundbreaking therapies receive fewer stars, than hospitals in affluent suburbs that treat fewer and simpler conditions. This just does not make sense.
- Hospitals cannot be rated like movies. Hospital ratings should take into account sociodemographic factors that affect health and should be based on specific categories—like cancer care or chronic care—that are more meaningful to patients.

**An unintended consequence of the new star ratings system may cause patients to avoid the best hospitals for their conditions.**

- Under the ratings, most of the country's teaching hospitals—the hospitals that are able to provide the most advanced care—received one, two, or three stars, while hospitals that provide less complex care, or are located in non-urban areas, are often more highly rated. Teaching hospitals set the standard of care, teach other doctors, and pioneer new treatments; and they do this for patients with some of the most complex medical conditions, sometimes who cannot be cared for by other hospitals
- In addition to potentially driving patients away from some of the best hospitals for their conditions, it would be extremely concerning if payers started to use these new star ratings to drive patients away from teaching hospitals and the access to the innovative, cutting-edge treatments these institutions develop and provide.

**Star ratings do not provide an accurate picture of hospital quality.**

- Assigning one “magic” number of stars implies that hospitals have been measured on an equal basis and that the comparisons are fair. Unfortunately, this is not true.
- Analysis of the ratings has confirmed that the lower the number of measures a hospital reported, the more likely it is that a hospital received a higher star rating.

- The fact that nearly half of the hospitals that received five-star ratings didn't report on 60 percent of quality measures is extremely troubling. The reasons a hospital might not report on a rating include lack of expertise in a certain area, or poor performance with an insufficient number of cases to report, causing CMS to ignore this measure in its overall rating for a hospital.
- This means that patients might seek care at a high-rated hospital that may actually be less prepared or equipped to treat their condition, especially those that are the most complex.
- Patients must avoid making decisions about hospitals base on the new Hospital Compare Star Ratings.