Grading Hospitals: National Group Releases Second Round of Safety Rankings

The Leapfrog Group released safety grades today for hospitals nationwide. The organization graded the nation’s 2,600 hospitals by using its own evaluation of 26 safety measures. This is Leapfrog’s second report for 2012. Its first release in June drew fire from local and national medical experts based on a number of apparent flaws in Leapfrog’s methodology. While Leapfrog has addressed some of those questions, many remain. Rankings can be found at www.hospitalsafetyscore.org.

What Does this Report Mean for Hawaii?

George Greene, Esq., President and CEO of the Healthcare Association of Hawaii, believes this report has little or no new discoveries. “Evaluating hospitals is nothing new,” He said. “Hospitals are regularly audited by a vast number of outside groups and organizations, many of which have stood the test of time and are government-sanctioned. One such example is the Health and Human Services website www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov; but unlike this evaluation, Leapfrog does not actually conduct site visits. Instead, it relies on third-party information.

Leapfrog ranked ten Hawaii hospitals. The average grade for Hawaii was a B minus. “While some facilities fared better than others in Leapfrog’s report, we’re not reading too much into it. In Leapfrog’s June report, it was widely discovered that it used information that was outdated and/or inaccurate.

“There are bigger questions about Leapfrog’s methodology. Chief among them is why such a heavy weighting is given to hospitals that complete the Leapfrog survey. The hospitals that do not – typically because these are the very hospitals that have the least resources – are docked significantly. They are not given credit for any innovations they are undertaking. Our overall assessment is that Leapfrog’s current model may create an unfair bias against hospitals which are under-resourced. For this and other reasons, we’re more interested in Leapfrog’s methodology than we are in their most recent round of grades.
“At the end of the day, assigning a letter grade may be an over-simplified way to reflect patient care. We remain hopeful that Leapfrog’s methodology will evolve into a more reliable, verifiable process. In the meantime, we expect Hawaii’s patients and caregivers will continue doing what they’ve always done when shopping for medical care – visit the facilities themselves, and talk to their friends, families, and health care providers.”

What is Hawaii Doing to Address Patient Safety?
The Healthcare Association of Hawaii (HAH) works collaboratively with Hawaii’s medical community to share best practices, improve access to state-of-the-art training, and address any areas needing improvement. There are a number of initiatives in Hawaii that are improving patient outcomes. For instance, HAH’s robust committee on Quality and Patient Safety is comprised of Hawaii’s top quality leaders in each continuum of care. They come together to move the bar ever-higher in patient care.

Additionally, HAH leads the Partnership for Patients initiative for Hawaii. This is a nationwide program specifically devoted to patient safety and the reduction of avoidable readmissions. HAH is not alone in its work to advance quality care. HMSA and Premier run the Advance Hospital Care program which addresses patient safety in Hawaii hospitals, and there are a vast number of quality programs in state and local government as well as the hospitals in themselves.

The health care industry is changing rapidly, and the brightest and best minds are devoted to improving quality for the patients we serve here in our islands. George Greene said, “In looking at the broader picture, it’s important to note that hospitals were the first medical entity to begin voluntarily disclosing data to the public. They have been doing so for more than a decade and will continue to do so. It’s in the best interest of all concerned.”

ABOUT THE HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATION OF HAWAII (HAH):
Established in 1939, the Healthcare Association of Hawaii (HAH) is the unifying voice of Hawaii’s health care providers, and an authoritative and respected leader in shaping Hawaii’s health care policy. HAH works with committed partners and stakeholders to establish a more equitable, sustainable health care system driven to improve quality, efficiency, and effectiveness for patients and communities. For more information, visit HAH.org or contact Adria Estribou, Communications Manager at (808) 521-8961 or aestribou@hah.org.