

## Medicare Identifies Best and Worst Hospitals for Hip, Knee Replacements

Jordan Rau | December 19, 2013



Medicare has begun tracking the outcomes of hip and knee replacement surgeries, identifying 95 hospitals where elderly patients were more likely to suffer significant setbacks. The government also named 97 hospitals where patients tended to have the smoothest recoveries.

The analysis, which was released last week, is the latest part of the government's push to improve quality at the nation's hospitals instead of simply paying Medicare patients' bills. Medicare already assesses hospital death rates, how consistently hospitals follow basic medical guidelines and how patients rate their stays. The evaluation of hip and knee surgery outcomes is significant because for the first time, Medicare is rating hospitals' performance on two common elective procedures.

Many patients needing joint replacements want to know a hospital's record when choosing where to have the procedure done. This is not usually the case for treatment of conditions Medicare has evaluated previously, such as heart attacks.

Of the 95 hospitals where knee and hip surgery patients experienced difficulties after the operation, nine were rated having both high readmissions and high complication rates. Those hospitals were: Froedtert Hospital in Milwaukee; Grant Medical Center in Columbus, Ohio; Mercy St. Anne Hospital in Toledo, Ohio; Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago; the Pennsylvania Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania Health System in Philadelphia; Peterson Regional Medical Center in Kerrville, Texas; Reston Hospital Center in Reston, Va.; Shannon Medical Center in San Angelo, Texas, and Southside Regional Medical Center in Petersburg, Va.

Some of those hospitals complained Monday that Medicare's assessments were outdated since they covered operations between July 2009 through June 2012. A spokeswoman for Shannon Medical Center said the hospital has improved since then, adding better technology and opening a clinic to follow up with patients seven days after leaving. A spokeswoman for Southside Regional Medical Center said that hospital adopted a new treatment model in 2012 for joint and spine patients and that their outcomes have "drastically improved."

Medicare was cautious in how it marked hospitals, only categorizing them as outliers when their records in hip and knee replacements were statistically different from the national average. The overwhelming majority of hospitals—about 19 out of 20—were branded average, a Kaiser Health News analysis found.

Out of the 97 hospitals that did better than average in avoiding either readmissions or complications, 25 were rated as being better at both measures. Those included some big hospitals such as Sutter General Hospital in Sacramento, Calif., and the Hospital for Special Surgery in Manhattan. They also included some local hospitals such as Holy Cross Hospital in Fort Lauderdale, and several physician-owned hospitals that specialize in these types of surgeries, such as Arkansas Surgical Hospital in Little Rock.

About 600,000 patients in the traditional Medicare program have their hips or knees replaced each year. The growing popularity of these operations has made them a more significant expense for Medicare and private insurers. In 2010, there were 719,000 knee replacements costing nearly \$12 billion and 332,000 hip replacements nearly \$8 billion, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

Medicare published the new outcomes data on its Hospital Compare website. While few consumers use that site, this information may reach a greater audience later on through groups and publications, such as Consumer Reports, that tap Medicare's data in devising their own hospital ratings.

"With elective procedures, consumers like to do a lot of research to pick the right doctor and the right hospital, so this is a good first step," said Leah Binder, CEO of the Leapfrog Group, a nonprofit funded by employers that judges hospital quality. However, she said the new ratings would be of limited use for most patients because the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services judged most hospitals' performance as normal.

"We know there's a significant variation among hospitals, but CMS reports them all as average," Binder said.

### **Financial Pressure**

Hospitals may soon feel a financial pinch from the evaluations. Medicare plans to add hip and knee readmission rates to the criteria it uses when deciding whether to penalize hospitals each year.

Since October, Medicare has been paying less than it normally does to 2,225 hospitals after determining their rates of rebounds for patients with pneumonia, heart attacks and heart failure were too high, even by a small amount. Starting in the fall of 2014, when the joint replacements are to be factored into the penalty program, hospitals are at risk of losing as much as 3 percent of Medicare payments for each patient stay.

In its new evaluation of hip and knee replacement patients, Medicare used two measures. One was how often the patients ended up being readmitted to the hospital within 30 days of discharge. The other was how often they suffered one of eight complications after the operation. Those included a heart attack, pneumonia, sepsis or shock within seven days of admission. They also included bleeding at the site of the surgery, a blood clot in the lung or death within a month of admission. Medicare also counted mechanical complications with implants and infections of the joint or wound within 90 days of admission.

The quality of joint implants has been under scrutiny for several years. Some of the surgical devices have been plagued by quality problems, especially among artificial hips made of interlocking metal parts. The friction created by these joints can create metal debris that damages the surrounding flesh and bone. Two manufacturers have recalled their devices since 2010.

### **Problems Are Declining**

Nationwide, the number of readmissions following hip and knee replacement surgeries has been dropping, but not as quickly as readmission rates for heart attack, heart failure or pneumonia patients, according to a Medicare-commissioned study by the Yale New Haven Health Services Corporation Center for Outcomes Research and Evaluation.

Dr. Eric Coleman, an expert on readmissions at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, said some hospitals are trying to prevent joint replacement patients from returning by educating them ahead of the surgeries about how to take care of themselves and warning signs of problems. This program provides "a chance to walk you through what to expect, what your family would expect, how to arrange your home," Coleman said. "In most of the cases of readmission reductions, we're still very reactive."

Hospitals' clientele appears to play some role in how they fared after these surgeries. The outcomes for hip and knee replacements tend to be slightly worse for hospitals that serve a high proportion of Medicaid patients, according to the Yale study. The study also found that hospitals where more than one out of every five patients were African-American tended to have slightly higher complication and readmission rates than did hospitals with no black Medicare patients. However, the report noted, some of these hospitals serving large numbers of Medicaid or black patients also performed very well.

These kind of racial and economic disparities in readmissions have long troubled health policy experts. Some hospitals mostly cater to prosperous patients who have the money, resources and education to get necessary post-

surgical care after discharge. But safety net hospitals often have a harder time ensuring that low-income, less educated people follow the often complex instructions about how to recover from a major surgery or hospitalization.

In Medicare's new analysis, on average, hip and knee patients had a 5.4 percent chance of having to return to the hospital. Nationally, the average complication rate for patients after hip and knee replacement surgery was 3.4 percent. One hospital, Beaumont Health System in Royal Oak, Mich., had a mixed record: Patients there were more likely to be readmitted but less likely to suffer serious complications.

### Hospital-Wide Readmissions Published

The government also last week released its first ratings of how often Medicare patients of all diagnoses returned to hospitals within 30 days. That "all cause" measure is more encompassing than Medicare's appraisals based on heart attack, heart failure and pneumonia. A number of prominent experts, including Congress' Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, have been pushing for this measure to be used in setting financial penalties for hospitals.

Medicare's analysis found that 16 percent of Medicare patients ended up returning to a hospital within 30 days between July 2011 through June 2012. Again rates varied significantly. At 364 hospitals, or 8 percent, patients were more likely than average to return within a month, the data show. These included the Cleveland Clinic, as well as the clinic's hospital in Weston, Fla.; both of Johns Hopkins's hospitals in Baltimore; and New York-Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan.

Medicare did not count cases where the patient was scheduled to return to the hospital, such as when a lung cancer patient was admitted for pneumonia and later came back for a chemotherapy treatment that had been planned. Medicare calculated that patients were less likely than average to end up back for any reason at 315 hospitals, or 7 percent of the nation's total.

Nancy Foster, an executive with the American Hospital Association, said that tracking hospital-wide readmissions was of limited value to hospitals that wanted to do better. "Most of the interventions you would use are built and targeted around particular conditions," she said. "You have to know what's driving patients back into the hospital to address the problem. When you get this lump of all-cause readmissions, you don't know what to go after."

**Table: Hospitals Judged Best and Worst for Hip and Knee Readmissions and Complications**

Hospital Name	City	State	Readmission After Hip/Knee Surgery	Comlications Following Hip/Knee Surgery
DCH Regional Medical Center	Tuscaloosa	AL	--	Worse
Decatur Morgan Hospital-Decatur Campus	Decatur	AL	--	Worse
Gadsden Regional Medical Center	Gadsden	AL	--	Worse
Trinity Medical Center	Birmingham	AL	--	Worse
Arkansas Surgical Hospital	No. Little Rock	AR	Better	Better
Saline Memorial Hospital	Benton	AR	Worse	--
	Batesville	AR	--	Worse

White River Medical Center				
Scottsdale Healthcare-Shea Medical Center	Scottsdale	AZ	Better	--
Yavapai Regional Medical Center	Prescott	AZ	--	Better
Community Memorial FEIkHospital San Buenaventura	Ventura	CA	--	Worse
Doctors Medical Center	Modesto	CA	--	Worse
Eisenhower Medical Center	Rancho Mirgage	CA	Better	--
Enloe Medical Center	Chico	CA	Worse	--
Hoag Orthopedic Institute	Irvine	CA	Better	Better
Mercy Medical Center Redding	Redding	CA	Better	--
Saint John's Health Center	Santa Monica	CA	Better	Better
Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital	Salinas	CA	Better	--
St. Helena Hospital	Saint Helena	CA	--	Better
St. Joseph Hospital	Orange	CA	--	Better
Sutter Auburn Faith Hospital	Auburn	CA	--	Worse
Sutter General Hospital	Sacramento	CA	Better	Better
Torrance Memorial Medical Center	Torrance	CA	--	Better
Washington Hospital	Fremont	CA	Better	Better
Medical Center of Aurora	Aurora	CO	--	Worse
North Colorado Medical Center	Greeley	CO	--	Worse
Poudre Valley Hospital	Fort Collins	CO	Better	Better
Swedish Medical Center	Englewood	CO	--	Worse
Bridgeport Hospital	Bridgeport	CT	--	Worse
St Francis Hospital and Medical Center	Hartford	CT	--	Better

St Vincent's Medical Center	Bridgeport	CT	--	Worse
Providence Hospital	Washington	DC	Worse	--
Bayfront Medical Center Inc	Saint Petersburg	FL	Worse	--
Blake Medical Center	Bradenton	FL	Better	--
Boca Raton Regional Hospital	Boca Raton	FL	Better	--
Delray Medical Center	Delray Beach	FL	--	Better
Florida Hospital Memorial Medical Center	Daytona Beach	FL	--	Better
Heart of Florida Regional Medical Center	Davenport	FL	Better	Better
Holy Cross Hospital Inc	Fort Lauderdale	FL	Better	Better
Indian River Medical Center	Vero Beach	FL	--	Better
Jupiter Medical Center	Jupiter	FL	--	Better
Leesburg Regional Medical Center	Leesburg	FL	Worse	--
Ocala Regional Medical Center	Ocala	FL	Better	Better
Orlando Health	Orlando	FL	Worse	--
Sacred Heart Hospital	Pensacola	FL	--	Better
South Lake Hospital	Clermont	FL	--	Worse
St Joseph's Hospital	Tampa	FL	Worse	--
St Vincent's Medical Center	Jacksonville	FL	--	Better
Tampa General Hospital	Tampa	FL	--	Better
Emory University Hospital	Atlanta	GA	Better	--
Floyd Medical Center	Rome	GA	--	Worse
Saint Joseph's Hospital of Atlanta Inc	Atlanta	GA	Better	Better
St Joseph's Hospital – Savannah	Savannah	GA	--	Better
	Council Bluffs	IA	--	Worse

Alegent Health Mercy Hospital				
Genesis Medical Center - Davenport	Davenport	IA	--	Worse
Mercy Medical Center – Cedar Rapids	Cedar Rapids	IA	Better	--
Advocate Christ Hospital and Medical Center	Oak Lawn	IL	Worse	--
Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital	Downers Grove	IL	Worse	--
Evanston Hospital	Evanston	IL	Better	--
Galesburg Cottage Hospital	Galesburg	IL	Worse	--
Louis A Weiss Memorial Hospital	Chicago	IL	--	Worse
Northwestern Memorial Hospital	Chicago	IL	Worse	Worse
Proctor Hospital	Peoria	IL	--	Better
Riverside Medical Center	Kankakee	IL	--	Better
St Alexius Medical Center	Hoffman Estates	IL	--	Worse
Elkhart General Hospital	Elkhart	IL	Better	--
Franciscan St Elizabeth Health –Lafayette East	Lafayette	IL	--	Better
Indiana Orthopaedic Hospital	Indianapolis	IL	--	Better
Orthopaedic Hospital at Parkview North LLC	Fort Wayne	IL	Better	Better
Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center	Mishawaka	IL	--	Better
St Vincent Anderson Regional Hospital Inc	Anderson	IL	--	Worse
The Orthopaedic Hospital of Lutheran Health Network	Fort Wayne	IL	Better	--
Kansas Medical Center LLC	Andover	KS	Better	Better

Kansas Surgery and Recovery Center	Wichita	KS	--	Better
Olathe Medical Center	Olathe	KS	--	Better
Overland Park Regional Medical Center	Overland Park	KS	--	Worse
University of Kansas Hospital	Kansas City	KS	--	Worse
Baptist Health Louisville	Louisville	KY	--	Better
Minden Medical Center	Minden	LA	Worse	--
Cape Cod Hospital	Hyannis	MA	--	Better
New England Baptist Hospital	Boston	MA	Better	Better
Doctors' Community Hospital	Lanham	MD	Worse	--
Saint Ages Hospital	Baltimore	MD	Worse	--
Shady Grove Adventist Hospital	Rockville	MD	--	Worse
Sinai Hospital of Baltimore	Baltimore	MD	Worse	--
Western Maryland Regional Medical Center	Cumberland	MD	--	Better
Central Maine Medical Center	Lewiston	ME	--	Worse
Maine Medical Center	Portland	ME	Better	Better
Beaumont Health System	Grosse Pointe	MI	--	Worse
Beaumont Health System	Royal Oak	MI	Worse	Better
Bronson Methodist Hospital	Kalamazoo	MI	--	Better
Crittenton Hospital Medical Center	Rochester	MI	--	Better
Genesys Regional Medical Center – Health Park	Grand Blanc	MI	--	Worse
Mclaren – Greater Lansing	Lansing	MI	--	Better
St Joseph Mercy Oakland	Pontiac	MI	Better	Better
William Beaumont Hospital Troy	Troy	MI	--	Better

Mayo Clinic Methodist Hospital	Rochester	MN	--	Better
Barnes Jewish Hospital	Saint Louis	MO	--	Better
Boone Hospital Center	Columbia	MO	--	Better
Des Peres Hospital	Saint Louis	MO	Worse	--
Heartland Regional Medical Center	Saint Joseph	MO	Better	Better
Mercy Hospital St Louis	Saint Louis	MO	Worse	--
North Kansas City Hospital	North Kansas City	MO	--	Worse
Poplar Bluff Regional Medical Center	Poplar Bluff	MO	--	Worse
Mississippi Baptist Medical Center	Jackson	MS	--	Better
North Mississippi Medical Center	Tupelo	MS	--	Better
South Central Regional Medical Center	Laurel	MS	--	Worse
Kalispell Regional Medical Center	Kalispell	MT	Better	--
St Vincent Healthcare	Billings	MT	--	Worse
Carolinas Medical Center-Northeast	Concord	NC	--	Worse
Memorial Mission Hospital and Asheville Surgery Center	Asheville	NC	Better	Better
Onslow Memorial Hospital	Jacksonville	NC	--	Worse
Park Ridge Health	Hendersonville	NC	--	Worse
Rowan Regional Medical Center	Salisbury	NC	--	Worse
Sanford Medical Center Bismarck	Bismarck	ND	--	Better
Sanford Medical Center Fargo	Fargo	ND	Better	--
Nebraska Orthopaedic Hospital	Omaha	NE	--	Better



Saint Elizabeth Regional Medical Center	Lincoln	NE	Better	Better
Wentworth-Douglass Hospital	Dover	NH	--	Worse
Centrastate Medical Center	Freehold	NJ	Worse	--
Saint Michael's Medical Center Inc	Newark	NJ	--	Worse
Presbyterian Hospital	Albuquerque	NM	Better	--
Spring Valley Hospital Medical Center	Las Vegas	NV	--	Worse
Community Memorial Hospital Inc	Hamilton	NY	Better	--
Hospital for Special Surgery	New York	NY	Better	Better
NYU Hospitals Center	New York	NY	--	Worse
South Nassau Communities Hospital	Oceanside	NY	--	Better
Southside Hospital	Bay Shore	NY	--	Better
St Catherine of Sienna Hospital	Smithtown	NY	--	Worse
St Peter's Hospital	Albany	NY	--	Better
United Health Services Hospital	Johnson City	NY	Better	--
Atrium Medical Center	Franklin	OH	--	Worse
Defiance Regional Medical Center	Defiance	OH	--	Worse
East Ohio Regional Hospital	Martins Ferry	OH	--	Worse
Grant Medical Center	Columbus	OH	Worse	Worse
Kettering Medical Center	Kettering	OH	Better	--
Mercy St Anne Hospital	Toledo	OH	Worse	--
Samaritan Regional Health System	Ashland	OH	Better	Better
Southwest General Health Center	Middleburg Heights	OH	--	Better

University of Toledo Medical Center	Toledo	OH	--	Worse
Jackson County Memorial Hospital	Altus	OK	Worse	--
Oklahoma Surgical Hospital LLC	Tulsa	OK	Better	Better
St Anthony Hospital	Oklahoma City	OK	--	Worse
Sacred Heart Medical Center – Riverbend	Springfield	OR	Better	--
Abington Memorial Hospital	Abington	PA	Worse	--
Lancaster General Hospital	Lancaster	PA	--	Worse
Meadville Medical Center	Meadville	PA	Better	--
Penn Presbyterian Medical Center	Philadelphia	PA	Worse	--
Pennsylvania Hospital of the Univ of PA	Philadelphia	PA	Worse	Worse
Pinnacle Health Hospitals	Harrisburg	PA	--	Worse
Reading Hospital	Reading	PA	Better	--
Riddle Memorial Hospital	Media	PA	--	Worse
St Clair Memorial Hospital	Pittsburgh	PA	--	Worse
St Luke’s Hospital Bethlehem	Bethlehem	PA	--	Worse
Thomas Jefferson University Hospital	Philadelphia	PA	Worse	--
Beaufort County Memorial Hospital	Beaufort	SC	Worse	--
Roper Hospital	Charleston	SC	--	Better
Baptist Memorial Hospital	Memphis	TN	--	Worse
Henry County Medical Center	Paris	TN	--	Worse
Johnson City Medical Center	Johnson City	TN	--	Worse
Memorial Healthcare System Inc	Chattanooga	TN	Better	Better

Parkwest Medical Center	Knoxville	TN	Worse	--
Saint Thomas Midtown Hospital	Nashville	TN	--	Better
St Thomas Hospital	Nashville	TN	Better	--
Wellmont Holston Valley Medical Center	Kingsport	TN	Worse	--
Baptist St Anthony's Hospital	Amarillo	TX	--	Worse
Christus Santa Rosa Hospital	San Antonio	TX	Better	--
Christus St Michael Health System	Texarkana	TX	Worse	--
Covenant Medical Center	Lubbock	TX	--	Better
Doctors Hospital at Renaissance	Edinburg	TX	--	Better
Grace Medical Center	Lubbock	TX	Better	--
Houston Orthopedic and Spine Hospital	Bellaire	TX	--	Worse
Peterson Regional Medical Center	Kerrville	TX	Worse	Worse
Plaza Medical Center of Fort Worth	Fort Worth	TX	--	Better
Quail Creek Surgical Hospital	Amarillo	TX	--	Better
Seton Medical Center Austin	Austin	TX	--	Better
Shannon Medical Center	San Angelo	TX	Worse	Worse
St Joseph Regional Health Center	Bryan	TX	Worse	--
Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas	Dallas	TX	--	Better
VHS Harlingen Hospital Company LLC	Harlingen	TX	Better	Better
Woodland Heights Medical Center	Lufkin	TX	Worse	--
Mountain View Hospital	Payson	UT	--	Worse

Carillion Roanoke Memorial Hospital	Roanoke	VA	--	Better
Inova Mount Vernon Hospital	Alexandria	VA	Better	--
Reston Hospital Center	Reston	VA	Worse	Worse
Sentara Leigh Hospital	Norfolk	VA	Better	Better
Southside Regional Medical Center	Petersburg	VA	Worse	Worse
Wythe County Community Hospital	Wytheville	VA	Better	--
Valley Medical Center	Renton	WA	--	Better
Froedtert Memorial Lutheran Hospital	Milwaukee	WI	Worse	Worse
Mercy Health System Corp	Janesville	WI	--	Worse
Orthopaedic Hospital of Wisconsin	Glendale	WI	Better	--
St Elizabeth Hospital	Appleton	WI	--	Worse
St Mary's Hospital	Madison	WI	--	Worse
A dash (--) indicates the hospital had average performance for that indicator.				

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