



What can you do to help make sure you are getting GOOD QUALITY CARE?

Issue 11

This document is part of a series of information resources to help you get good quality health care.

It's important to know that getting good quality care does not happen automatically. While you might tend to assume that all patient care is good quality care, research studies have shown that some care does not measure up to quality standards.

To help make sure that you and your family are getting the care that works best for your condition, you will need to be informed and involved. Below are two examples of what you can do to help make sure you are getting good quality care:

1 You can check to see if the care you are getting is the care that is known to work best

Some information about quality guidelines has been written specifically for patients. You can use this information to check on the care you have been getting.

- For example, a brochure might tell what screening tests and other care you should be getting if you have an ongoing condition such as diabetes, asthma, or heart disease.
- There is also information that compares different treatments and tells which ones work best for certain conditions. This information often includes references to the research studies that were done.

Learn More

The federal Agency for Health Care Research and Quality has produced summaries for patients that tell about effective health treatments for selected conditions (www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov). These summaries are based on expert reviews of medical research.

A government website (www.guideline.gov) with technical medical information for health professionals includes some links to resources that are written for patients. Click on *Resources* and then click on *Patient Resources Links*.

2

You can use public reports to compare the quality of health plans, hospitals, and other health care providers

If you need to choose a hospital, nursing home, or other health care provider, there might be a report with information that lets you make quality comparisons. Often, these reports include information that lets you compare health care providers to see how well they are doing at giving patients the types of health care that has been shown to work best.

- One purpose of these public reports with quality comparisons is to give you information to help you decide where to get your care.
- Another purpose is to encourage health care providers to improve the quality of care they provide.

Most public reports with quality comparisons are produced by state or federal government agencies or by large business groups or health care coalitions. They are typically on websites and some are available as printed reports. They are sometimes called *quality report cards*, *quality score cards*, or *performance reports*.

“Hospital Compare” is an example of a report with quality comparisons

The government website called *Hospital Compare* (www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov) has quality information on hospitals throughout the United States.

- You can use this website to compare the quality of hospitals within a state, county, city, or zip code.
- Using information from hospital records, *Hospital Compare* **shows how well each hospital is doing at providing the care that is known to work best for patients** with certain medical conditions. An example is shown below.

EXAMPLE: USING A QUALITY STANDARD TO MAKE COMPARISONS

The federal government’s *Hospital Compare* website shows how well hospitals are doing at making sure surgery patients get an antibiotic at the *right time* (within an hour before surgery begins).

This website shows that on average, for hospitals throughout the country, **only 77% of surgery patients were being given antibiotics at the right time.**

- Some of the hospitals have much *better* quality scores (scores that are much higher than 77%).
- Some of the hospitals have much *lower* quality scores (scores that are much lower than 77%).

To find out how well a particular hospital did on this quality standard and other quality standards for hospital care, visit the website at www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov

Learn More

Besides *Hospital Compare*, here are other government websites with quality comparisons:

- For nursing home care: www.medicare.gov/NHCompare
- For home health care www.medicare.gov/HHCompare
- For kidney dialysis facilities: www.Medicare.gov/dialysis