Hospital Watch USA: questions and answers

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If you do not find an answer to your question send us an email.

What is HospitalWatch?

HospitalWatch is an initiative of Citizens4health that leverages reliable publicly available data and information about hospitals to improve the health of individuals and communities. Our goal is to make all hospitals top performing hospitals in various quality and civic measures. The HospitalWatch database driven program helps individuals enhance medical decision-making and engages them as citizens, in order to improve health and healthcare services for themselves, their community and the nation. HospitalWatch is guided by the belief that citizen engagement is crucial for achieving Citizens4health's vision for an American healthcare system. HospitalWatch connects to the Tool Box for Citizen Engagement: Take Action (Get personal, Get social, Get Political) for information, ideas and tools for engagement with healthcare stakeholders.

Who funds HospitalWatch?

Hospitalwatch is mostly volunteer "labor of love" effort. Currently it is self-funded, and we have received no support from any organizations, individuals, government or other entity. Our website and software development are provided pro-bono by ZivTech.

Where is the information from and how is the quality assured? How do you gather the information, is it reliable?

We use established indicators collected by reliable sources such as Medicare, the VA system, the states and hospital IRS reported information. We assume that the information is reliable and go to great length to make sure it is also valid. We provide an

opportunity for organizations involved to verify and challenge the data reported. Our goal is to have reliable, meaningful and actionable data.

How are you different from existing hospital public reporting such as MedicareCompare and Leapfrog?

Unlike other sites that provide performance information to choose hospitals, Hospitalwatch's goal is to make all hospitals top hospitals. Because you cannot choose which hospital to go to we believe that you should be able to work with your local hospital to make it the best it can be. Additionally, we hope to make a wide variety of performance data available and provide meaningful reports to the users. Additionally, we strive to achieve excellent user experience at our web site.

Who is involved and are there conflict of interests?

Maintaining neutrality and avoiding conflict of interest are critical to our work. You can check the list of people involved in hospital watch. Should you have questions or concerns please let us know.

Why are you doing the HospitalWatch?

We believe there are many reasons to focus on the performance of hospitals.

1. Hospitals vary in quality of the healthcare they provide. Because medical events are unpredictable, even if we look at the quality from a personal point of view, we would want all hospitals to achieve the best care they can provide.

2. Hospitals are central to the economy of their communities; significant changes will greatly impact and can disrupt the financial well being of the community.
3. Hospital care is expensive and is a major contributor to the cost of healthcare on the national level and the projected national debt in particular. Hospitals are central to the healthcare delivery system.
4. Hospitals vary in the type of governance, type of services, and quality of care for various clinical conditions.

What information about the hospitals will you include, and why?

HospitalWatch provides information in the following sections:

The hospital profile includes general information about the hospital, how safe is your hospital rating, our Liberty Bell citizen oriented overall performance rating, information and tools to engage with the hospitals leadership and other stakeholders.

How safe is your hospital? provides a pass/ fail rating of hospital safety performance and includes tools to get to zero errors by 2015. We rate how safe the hospital on a PASS/ FAIL grade which we reports at How safe is your hospital?

Quality of healthcare delivered at the hospital provides information about the medical care provided by the hospital. We include information and tools to make the user an effective part of the treatment team to achieve excellent outcomes.

Public reporting, accountability and transparency examines public reporting by the hospital and provide a rating scale for the organization's accountability and transparency.

Cost and value of medical care provides information about the cost and value of medical services provided by the hospital.

Access to quality healthcare examines the experience of patients attempting to receive services at the hospital.

Governance and community benefit: How the hospital helps their communities? We provided information about the hospital's contribution to the community.

Patient experience of the hospital experience provides information about what patients who used the hospital say about their experience. How recently-discharged patients responded to a national survey about their hospital experience.

What are the goals for HospitalWatch?

Its initial focus is the Delaware Valley (Southeast PA, South New Jersey and Northern Delaware). Meaningful change requires a process for monitoring outcomes. Additionally it will include an interactive format for coming up with additional outcomes to measure. HospitalWatch and Citizens4health web sites will have a regular report of the progress toward achieving the goals. Efforts will be made to extend the process to other regions. (Click here for time line) We look forward to work with individuals and organizations dedicated to improving the US healthcare system.

What other information is included in HosptialWatch?

The initiative includes information about the hospital, best practice in the various sections, aspirationnal goals, tools for taking action, additional resources. We subject the hospital to a check up. We use data to check up on the hospital's performance.

Using the information and tools for public engagement, we believe that you can make a positive difference in the quality of care provided.... Additionally, holding hospitals accountable for their health outcomes, community activity and financial performance may contribute to getting national health care cost under control.

How do you decide on best practice?

We use the following criteria for best practice:

1.   Potential impact

2.   Ease of use

3.   Availability

We will include any feedback to improve the choices we make about best practice.

The healthcare consumer is presented with multiple ratings and ads that claim the superiority of one or another hospital, one program or another.

How do you understand the challenge of healthcare in the United States?

Hospitals face many challenges in providing the healthcare services that we need. Atul Gwande MD, a surgeon and well known writer summarizes that challenges in the following paragraph,

Hospitals are complex organizations. Half a century ago, medicine was neither costly nor effective. Since then, however, science has combated our ignorance. It has enumerated and identified, according to the international disease classification system,

more than 13,600 diagnoses—13,600 different ways our bodies can fail. And for each one we've discovered beneficial remedies—remedies that can reduce suffering, extend lives, and sometimes stop a disease altogether. But those remedies now include more than six thousand drugs and four thousand medical and surgical procedures. Our job in medicine is to make sure that all of this capability is deployed, town by town, in the right way at the right time, without harm or waste of resources, for every person alive. And we're struggling. There is no industry in the world with 13,600 different service lines to deliver.

What do you mean by public engagement with stakeholders?

It is clear however that hospitals should be accountable and expected to achieve highest level of clinical and financial outcomes. By engaging with hospitals as consumers, and citizens, in addition to patients, we can have an important role to play in achieving the goals of Citizens4health.

What do you hope will happen next?

As healthcare is local, the initial focus of the initiative is hospitals in the Delaware Valley but can easily be implemented in other areas. We hold politicians accountable for the claims they make about healthcare.

Why should I care?

For you, your family and millions of Americans, hospitals make a difference between life and death, but as is well known not all hospitals are equal when it comes to

performance that matters; quality, safety, access, cost, patient experience and meeting their tax exempt responsibility.

As patients we expect the care we receive is the right care at the right time without medical errors. If this were the case we can expect,

98,000 additional patients would survive each year.

About 197,000 patient complications would be avoided annually.

The average patient stay would decrease by nearly half a day.

As consumers we must ensure that the value of the health care services is affordable, fair and competitive. Yet,

For those with insurance, the cost to the individual and business in terms of insurance payments, co pays is escalating and becoming unaffordable for more and more Americans

For those with out insurance, the cost of hospital care is unaffordable.

As citizens we expect that taxes that are utilized for health care activities and tax exempt status is warranted. Yet,

There is little accountability as to the utilization of funding for hospital care.

There is limited accountability for the hospital's activities for the public good

As health care providers we expect to provide out patients optimal care. Yet,

Not all providers are equal when it comes to diagnosing and treating medical condition

Poor health care accounts for significant cost

How do you define quality Healthcare?

Quality healthcare can be defined as the extent to which patients get the care they need in a manner that most effectively protects or restores their health. This means having timely access to care, getting treatment that medical evidence has found to be effective. When it comes to hospitals, quality healthcare includes diagnosis and treatment along the continuum from emergency room to discharge that leads to the best patient outcomes. Additionally quality hospital care includes the post hospital experience thorough care coordination. Most importantly quality hospital care is safe for the patient.

How do you plan to achieve your goals?

- Providing a framework and hosting a non partisan deliberative, solution oriented process informed by facts associated with local cultural, health and political realities
- Providing tools to hold the various stakeholders accountable for agreed upon health related outcomes
- Providing information and tools to make healthcare services effective, sustainable and accountable

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What is your time frame for achieving the goals?

HospitalWatch is a process to improve hospital care as part of overall healthcare. Its initial focus is the Delaware Valley (Southeast PA, South New Jersey and Northern Delaware). Meaningful change requires a process for monitoring outcomes. Additionally it will include an interactive format for coming up with additional outcomes to measure. HospitalWatch and Citizens4health web sites will have a regular report of the progress toward achieving the goals. Efforts will be made to extend the process to other regions. (Click here for time line)

What can I do to be part of the solution?

Citizens4health believes that we must all contribute to improving public reporting as an important step to improving healthcare for all Americans. Click on Take Action to learn more of what you can do in the personal, social and political arenas.

What are civic engagement resources and tools?

Keeping with our vision and mission, and the goals of HosptialWatch, we will follow the listed time line to address the information needs for consumers, patients and citizens. Additionally, through our other initiatives we will be present to the public information about hospital care, governance of health care institutions, how hospitals meet the requirements nonprofit status.

We also cover news and information on healthcare transparency, value-driven health care, public reporting legislation and healthcare report cards. (Sign-up for newsletter)