Quality Of Care Up At U.S. Hospitals

Lindsey Tanner, AP

A report says treatment has improved substantially at U.S. hospitals for several ailments, including heart attacks, pneumonia and children's asthma. The information is based on more than 3,000 hospitals accredited by the Joint Commission, an independent regulatory group. On average, hospitals in the report gave recommended heart attack treatment almost 98 percent of the time in 2009, versus 89 percent in 2002. That includes aspirin upon arriving and aspirin and beta blockers upon leaving.
For pneumonia, recommended treatment was given almost 93 percent of the time in 2009. That compares with 72 percent in 2002. And for asthma care in children, it was 88 percent versus 71 percent in 2007, the first year the commission included that in its annual report. Substantial improvement was also seen in surgical care, including appropriate use of antibiotics. The score rose to 96 percent from 77 percent in 2004.

The results suggest that increasing numbers of patients are surviving because they're receiving better care, said Dr. Mark Chassin, the commission's president. "Many of these measures reflect processes of care that, when done correctly, save lives," he said.

The percentage of hospitals with scores greater than 90 percent also increased substantially. For example, in the 2002 report regarding heart attacks, only half of hospitals had a score that high, compared with 95 percent in 2009. For pneumonia care, the percentage climbed from just five percent in 2002 to 76 percent last year. However, performance remained low on two measures added to the list in 2005. Overall, clot-busting drugs were given to heart attack patients within 30 minutes of arrival only 55 percent of the time, versus 39 percent in 2005; and pneumonia patients in intensive care received timely antibiotics 68 percent of the time, versus 50 percent in 2005.

The commission requires hospitals it accredits to report performance data so the commission can make it public. Scores for individual hospitals are available at http://www.qualitycheck.org. [1]

The commission plans to add a requirement that hospitals achieve certain performance levels on measures in the report. Specific performance levels are being determined and the commission expects to add them to its accreditation checklist in 2012, Chassin said.

http://www.surgicalproductsmag.com/news/2010/09/quality-care-us-hospitals

Links:
[1] http://www.qualitycheck.org