

Friday, January 20, 2012

Mission Health Among Top 15 Health Systems In U.S.

To many folks across the Western North Carolina mountains, the recent announcement that our own Mission Health System has been ranked among the nation's best hospitals really comes as no big surprise.

After all, WNC's largest health care system had racked up more than 20 major honors in the past seven years or so prior to earning a spot this month among 15 hospitals named as tops in the United States by Thomson Reuters. The organization is widely regarded as a leading provider of evaluation and assessment of quality for a variety of businesses and professions, including health care providers.

This latest accolade, part of Thomson Reuters' fourth annual study of clinical performance, is based on the company's analysis of several important components of the day-to-day operations (no pun intended) of medium-sized hospitals across the country.

Among the areas evaluated by the researchers were mortality rates, patient safety, frequency of complications, average length of stay, and 30-day readmission rates. The study and rankings are based solely on data and statistics, with no site-visit from evaluators as part of the process.

High points for Mission include consistent post-discharge 30-day mortality rates, while similar rates at similar hospitals increased significantly; a lower-than-expected rate of patient deaths; shorter average length of stay for patients; and dramatically fewer complicating factors experienced by patients.

The fact that the study is data-driven makes the high marks from Thomson Reuters "a big deal," says Ron Paulus, Mission president and CEO. "Thomson Reuters is an acknowledged leader in this kind of measurement and analysis, and it's an objective model," Paulus says. "U.S. News and World Report and (some other studies) are opinion-based, but this is objective."

The ranking also provides independent, outside validation of the continuing high quality of health care provided by the 7,000 employees under Paulus' charge, and the man at the top is quick to point that out himself. "This is not what a CEO does," he says. "This is what the caregivers do and the teams that perform the work."

Rankings such as the one most recently bestowed upon Mission do more than simply provide another bragging point for the annual report or give hospital administrators another shiny bauble to hang upon the office wall. They also give health care providers valuable feedback on what they are doing right and what they are doing wrong, helping them improve in the quality of services they are providing to their patients.

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Chenoweth, senior vice president for performance improvement and the 100 Hospitals program at Thomson Reuters. "Health care reform appears to have stimulated the increased rate of improvement at the system level."

And it doesn't take a brain surgeon to understand that systemic improvement in our hospitals is a good thing or to appreciate that the push for higher levels of quality and patient care is important for all those who work in a hospital from the brain surgeon to the discharge nurse, from the billing clerk to the lab specialist.

Yes, awards are nice. For those of us who have found ourselves within the walls of Mission – or have loved ones who have been under the treatment of Mission's network of doctors, nurses and other health care professionals – it does not require a trophy, plaque or framed certificate to prove the quality of care provided there.

But it sure doesn't hurt, sending a signal loud and clear that the long-term prognosis for top-notch health care for the people of Western North Carolina is positive.

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Thomson Reuters Announces Top Health Systems 15 Highest Performing Hospital Systems Improve Quality, Have Lower 30-Day Mortality Rate

Ann Arbor, MI January 16, 2012 - Thomson Reuters today released its fourth annual study identifying the top U.S. health systems based on balanced system-wide clinical performance.

The Thomson Reuters 15 Top Health Systems study culled data from more than 300 organizations and singled out 15 hospital systems that achieved superior clinical outcomes based on a composite score of eight measures of quality, patient perception of care and efficiency.

"This year we are seeing stronger system-wide performance and increased rates of improvement, particularly among the 15 Top Health Systems award winners. Health system performance is beginning to reflect aspirations to provide more consistent outcomes across communities served," said Jean Chenoweth, senior vice president for performance improvement and 100 Top Hospitals® program at Thomson Reuters. "Healthcare reform appears to have stimulated the increased rate of improvement at the system level."

Among the key findings in the study were the following:

- Lower 30-Day Mortality Rates: 15 Top Health Systems held post-discharge 30 day mortality rates steady, while peer health systems demonstrated a significant increase in post discharge mortality.

- Better Survival Rates: Winning hospitals had 17 percent fewer deaths than expected considering patient severity, while non-winning hospitals had 4 percent more deaths than expected.

- Fewer Complications: Patients of the winning health systems had 19 percent fewer complications.

- Shorter Hospital Stays: Patients treated in the winning system hospitals have a median average length of stay of 4.7 days, nearly half a day shorter than their peers' median of 5.1 days.

- Better Patient Safety and Core Measure Adherence: Top health systems had 23 percent fewer adverse patient safety events than expected and had better adherence to core measures of care than their peers.

The study divides the top health systems into three comparison groups based on total operating expense of the member hospitals. The winners are as follows:

Large Health Systems (more than \$1.5 billion total operating expense)

- Banner Health, Phoenix, AZ
- CareGroup Healthcare System, Boston, MA
- Jefferson Health System, Radnor, PA
- Memorial Hermann Healthcare System, Houston, TX
- St. Vincent Health, Indianapolis, IN

Medium Health Systems (\$750 mil.-\$1.5 bil.)

- Baystate Health, Springfield, MA
- Geisinger Health System, Danville, PA
- HCA Central and West Texas Division, Austin, TX
- **Mission Health System, Asheville, NC**
- Prime Healthcare Services, Ontario, CA

Small Health Systems (less than \$750 mil.)

- Baptist Health, Montgomery, AL
- Maury Regional Healthcare System, Columbia, TN
- Poudre Valley Health System, Fort Collins, CO
- Saint Joseph Regional Health System, Mishawaka, IN
- Tanner Health System, Carrolton, GA


U.S. health systems with two or more short-term, general, non-federal hospitals; cardiac and orthopedic hospitals; and critical access hospitals were assessed in the study. Researchers looked at eight metrics that gauge clinical quality and efficiency: mortality, medical complications, patient safety, average length of stay, 30-day mortality rate, 30-day readmission rate, adherence to clinical standards of care (evidence-based core measures published by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services), and HCAHPS patient survey score (part of a national initiative sponsored by the United States Department of Health and Human Services to measure the quality of care in hospitals).

The study relied on public data from the 2010 Medicare Provider Analysis and Review (MedPAR) data and the CMS Hospital Compare data sets.

Researchers from the Thomson Reuters 100 Top Hospitals program have analyzed and reported on the performance of individual hospitals since 1993.

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About Mission Health

Mission Health, based in Asheville, N.C., is North Carolina's sixth largest health system and the tertiary care regional referral center for Western North Carolina and the adjoining region. Mission is a not-for-profit, independent community hospital system, and is accredited by The Joint Commission. Mission Hospital is the main hospital in the system and serves patients on two adjoining campuses in Asheville. With a medical staff of more than 750 physicians representing most specialties and subspecialties, Mission hospital is the busiest surgical hospital in North Carolina. Its centers of excellence include heart, stroke care and neurosciences, pediatrics and the region's dedicated Level II trauma center.