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America's 50 Best Hospitals 2008 Released by HealthGrades
Analysis of Patient Outcomes at U.S. Hospitals from 1999 to 2006 Identifies Top Performers
Hospitals Listed on HealthGrades' Consumer Web site, HealthGrades.com

GOLDEN, Colo. (February 25, 2008) – HealthGrades, the nation's leading independent healthcare ratings organization, today identified America's 50 Best Hospitals, an elite class of top-performing facilities. The HealthGrades America's 50 Best Hospital designation represents the healthcare industry's only quality ranking based solely on objective clinical outcomes among U.S. hospitals.

To identify the 2008 designees, HealthGrades researchers analyzed approximately 100 million hospitalization records from nearly 5,000 hospitals, from the years 1999 to 2006. To be listed among America's 50 Best Hospitals, facilities must have demonstrated clinical outcomes among the top five percent in the nation, not just in one medical specialty, but aggregated across 27 different procedures and diagnoses, and must have maintained this superior level of care during all years studied. These hospitals were found to have an average 27 percent lower mortality rate, on average, than all other U.S. hospitals.

“HealthGrades America's 50 Best Hospitals demonstrate survival rates that are among the highest in the nation, and complication rates that are among the lowest in the nation, and they do it year after year,” said Dr. Samantha Collier, HealthGrades' chief medical officer and lead study author. “These hospitals are proof that top-notch medical care is something that can be achieved with dedication and commitment to quality. As our nation increasingly focuses on disparities in healthcare cost and quality, it is these elite, world-class facilities that will lead the way.”

For the second consecutive year, the HealthGrades America's 50 Best Hospitals list contains nationally known facilities, such as Cedars Sinai in Los Angeles, Mayo Clinic in Minnesota and the Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland. But the list also identifies many hospitals that do not have national brand names, but that continue to demonstrate patient outcomes that are superior to their peers across the country.

As with all HealthGrades awards, the HealthGrades America's 50 Best Hospital designation is based exclusively on clinical outcomes – risk-adjusted mortality and complication rates for patients at nearly every hospital in the nation. Hospitals cannot apply for this independent analysis, and they cannot opt-in or out of being rated.

“Think about it,” said Collier. “Only a small percentage of the nation’s hospitals achieve this level of clinical excellence. These hospitals are doing something very, very special that begins with the leadership and is infused throughout the hospital and its staff.”

HealthGrades’ annual assessment of mortality and complication rates in American hospitals analyzes the following procedures and diagnoses and then risk-adjusts the data to account for differences in patient populations among hospitals:

- Atrial Fibrillation
- Back and Neck Surgery (Spinal Fusion)
- Back and Neck Surgery (except Spinal Fusion)
- Bowel Obstruction
- Carotid Surgery
- Cholecystectomy
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Coronary Bypass Surgery
- Coronary Interventional Procedures (Angioplasty and Stents)
- Diabetic Acidosis and Coma
- Gastrointestinal Bleed
- Gastrointestinal Surgeries and Procedures
- Heart Attack
- Heart Failure
- Hip Fracture Repair
- Pancreatitis
- Peripheral Vascular Bypass
- Pneumonia
- Prostatectomy
- Pulmonary Embolism
- Resection/Replacement of Abdominal Aorta
- Respiratory Failure
- Sepsis
- Stroke
- Total Hip Replacement
- Total Knee Replacement
- Valve Replacement Surgery

HealthGrades makes available to the public, at no charge, the quality ratings of every nonfederal hospital in the country at <http://www.healthgrades.com>.

Methodology

In this analysis, HealthGrades independently and objectively analyzed approximately 100 million Medicare patient records from fiscal years 1999 through 2006 for 27 medical procedures and diagnoses. Hospitals were required to meet minimum thresholds in terms of patient volumes, quality ratings, and the range of services provided in order to be considered. Prior to comparing the in-hospital mortality and complication rates of the nation’s hospitals, HealthGrades risk-adjusted the data to compare on equal footing hospitals that treated sicker patients. Hospitals with risk-adjusted mortality and

complication rates that scored in the top five percent or better nationally – which demonstrates superior overall clinical performance – were then recognized as Distinguished Hospitals for Clinical Excellence. Hospitals that received that designation the most consecutive times over the last six years were named HealthGrades America's 50 Best Hospitals. HealthGrades' methodology can be found in the study and on the company's Web site. (Each of the six designations was based on three years of Medicare data, so eight years of data were studied.)

About HealthGrades

Health Grades, Inc. (Nasdaq: HGRD) is the leading healthcare ratings organization, providing ratings and profiles of hospitals, nursing homes and physicians. Millions of consumers and many of the nation's largest employers, health plans and hospitals rely on HealthGrades' independent ratings and decision support resources to make healthcare decisions based on the quality of care. More information on the company can be found at <http://www.healthgrades.com>.

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Editor's note: A full copy of the analysis is available at <http://www.healthgrades.com> or by contacting Scott Shapiro at sshapiro@healthgrades.com.