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HealthGrades Study: Top Hospitals for Women's Health and Maternity Care Have Significantly Lower Mortality and Morbidity

Best-Performing Hospitals Have 76% Lower C-Section Complication Rates Compared with Poor Performers; Patient-Choice C-Sections Rise 8.7% from 2005 through 2007

Women's Health Mortality/Morbidity Improves 33% at Best-Performing Hospitals

New Hospital Ratings Free on HealthGrades.com

GOLDEN, Colo. (June 30, 2009) – Wide gaps in quality outcomes for women persist, not only when compared to men, but among hospitals and states, according to a new study released today by HealthGrades, the leading independent healthcare ratings organization. The *Sixth Annual HealthGrades Women's Health in American Hospitals* study identifies patient outcomes for maternity care and in-hospital treatment of 16 procedures/diagnoses concerning women's health. Ratings for individual hospitals have been posted at www.healthgrades.com.

Among the findings are that the nation's best-performing hospitals have complication rates for vaginal and C-section deliveries, as well as neonatal mortality rates, that are dramatically below those of poorly performing hospitals. Additionally, mortality and morbidity in women's health, women's cardiovascular procedures and women's bone and joint procedures improved 33% in the best-performing hospitals.

The study focuses on two major areas of care for women—maternity care and women's health—as these represent the gamut of women's healthcare needs. Only 15 hospitals across the nation provided the best comprehensive coverage in both maternity care and women's health.

“Women account for nearly 60 percent of all hospital admissions. Because of this, the impact that quality women's health has on our nation is tremendous,” said Dr. Rick May, senior physician consultant and a study co-author. “Based on the huge quality gaps we've identified in our study, it is crucial that women take a more active role in their healthcare by seeking out hospitals with the best quality outcomes and using this information in their decision when selecting a hospital.”

Women's Health Outcomes

HealthGrades analyzed more than 2.6 million hospitalizations using Medicare data from all 50 states from 2005 through 2007. Women's Health outcomes were separated into several aspects of care: **Women's Medicine** (heart attack, congestive heart failure, pneumonia, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and stroke); **Women's Cardiovascular Procedures** (coronary bypass surgery, peripheral vascular bypass, coronary interventional procedures, resection/replacement of

abdominal aortic aneurysm, carotid surgery, and valve replacement); and **Women's Bone & Joint Health** (total knee and total hip replacement surgeries, spinal surgeries, and hip fracture repair). The study found:

- 169 hospitals were recognized as HealthGrades 2009/2010 Women's Health Excellence Award™ recipients. This places them within the top 5% of all hospitals nationwide.
- Among eligible hospitals, a total of **18,089** lives could have been saved and **6,849** complications avoided if all eligible hospitals performed at the level of the best-performing hospitals in women's health.
- Improvement in mortality and morbidity for top-performing hospitals was 33% compared with the poor-performing hospitals.
- Only one state, Colorado, was in the top 10 (lowest mortality and morbidity) for all three categories of women's health. Florida, Michigan, Montana, Ohio and South Dakota ranked among the top 10 in at least two out of three categories of women's health.
- 82% (14,930) of the potentially preventable deaths were associated with just four diagnoses: pneumonia, stroke, heart failure, and heart attack.

Maternity Care Outcomes

HealthGrades analyzed approximately 13 million hospital delivery and neonate records from 2005 through 2007 in more than 1,500 hospitals in 19 all-payer states and found:

- 218 hospitals received a HealthGrades five-star rating for their maternity care programs. Of these, 145 had complications rates and weight-stratified neonatal mortality low enough to place them among the top 10% of hospitals studied. These 145 hospitals are recipients of the HealthGrades 2009/2010 Maternity Care Excellence Award™.
- The difference in quality of care between maternity programs is substantial for both vaginal and C-section deliveries: the best-performing hospitals had 52% fewer maternal complications among women who had vaginal births compared to poor-performing hospitals and 76% fewer complications among women who had C-sections. Patient-choice C-sections had the largest difference at 84% between best- and poor-performing hospitals.
- If all hospitals, among the 19 states studied, performed at the level of the best-performing hospitals from 2005 through 2007, **182,129** women may have avoided developing one or more in-hospital major obstetrics complications.
- Best-performing hospitals had a 56% lower weight-stratified neonatal mortality compared to poor-performing hospitals.
- C-section rates average approximately 32% among the 19 states studied.
- Quality inconsistencies are seen when comparing states; those with the lowest complication rates have almost half the complications compared with states that had the highest complication rates.
- Patient-choice C-section rates – those where no medical necessity was indicated – rose 8.7% from 2005 through 2007, going from 2.07% to 2.25% of deliveries.

The complete study can be found at <http://www.healthgrades.com>.

About HealthGrades

Health Grades, Inc. (Nasdaq: [HGRD](#)) is the leading independent healthcare ratings organization, providing quality ratings, profiles and cost information on the nation's hospitals, physicians,

nursing homes and prescription drugs. Millions of patients and many of the nation's largest employers, health plans and hospitals rely on HealthGrades' quality ratings, advisory services and decision-support resources. The HealthGrades Network of Web sites, including HealthGrades.com and WrongDiagnosis.com, is a top-ten health property according to ComScore and is the Internet's leading destination for patients choosing providers. More information on how HealthGrades guides America to better healthcare can be found at <http://www.healthgrades.com>.

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