

Maine hospitals' quality of care ranked third-best in U.S.

Hospitals in Maine ranked third-best in the entire country across all measures of care, according to a recent report from the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

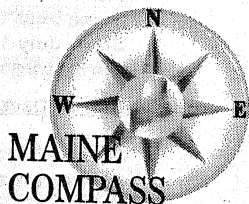
The agency's mission, as one of the 12 agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services, is to improve the quality, safety, efficiency and effectiveness of health care for all Americans.

The report, AHRQ's 2010 State Snapshots, summarized Maine's performances relative to all states regarding:

- Overall health care quality.
- Quality of care by types of care (preventive, acute, and chronic).
- Quality of care by settings of care (hospitals, ambulatory care, nursing home and home health).
- Quality of care for five clinical conditions (cancer, diabetes, heart disease, maternal and child health, and respiratory diseases).
- Quality of care in other special focus areas, including the rate of potentially avoidable hospitalizations, where Maine scored 26 percent better than the national average.

Maine hospitals' rating as the third-best in the country includes consideration of many different dimensions of hospital care including, heart disease, patient safety, respiratory diseases, patient experience, and maternal and child health.

The State Snapshot is just one example of an objective report where Maine hospitals shine for the quality of care they provide. Using all of the data posted on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Hospital Compare website, a state-level analysis shows Maine hospitals are the best in the country for heart attack and pneumonia treatment,



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third-best for surgical care and fifth-best for heart failure care and providing a good patient experience.

The 2011 annual report on Health Care Associated Infections in Maine from the Maine Quality Forum reported a 40 percent decrease in the number of central line-related blood stream infections among patients in the intensive care unit, so Maine's rate is now 25 percent better than the national average. Our doctors, nurses and other caregivers, however, continue to strive to bring the infection rate to zero.

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We know that Maine's hospital caregivers work hard continually and collaboratively to improve the quality of care. For example, our hospitals led the nation to form one of the first statewide infection prevention collaboratives, where representatives from every hospital work with partnering organizations to prevent infections.

Hospital representatives meet collectively several times a year with the Northeast Healthcare Quality Foundation, the quality improvement organization for Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, to discuss their institutions' quality data and learn how to improve care. Hospitals

are constantly implementing new systems of care to ensure that every patient gets the right care at the right place at the right time, every time.

And Maine hospitals are serious about keeping their focus on quality improvement. The Maine Hospital Association's Quality Council, composed of hospital leaders from across the state, advises the association's board of directors about quality of care issues.

Quality of care is one of the four pillars of the Maine Hospital Association's health reform plan, "In Pursuit of Excellence" (www.themha.org). This document outlines a vision of what hospitals could and should do over the next five years to lead health care reform.

Even with this stream of positive news, the goal always has to be to improve. You can be sure that Maine's hospitals will continue to work toward the objective of providing the very best quality care.

We're pleased to see national recognition for the high quality of care provided by doctors, nurses, technicians and the entire hospital staff and we are very proud of our members' ongoing robust efforts to improve.

Steven R. Michaud is president of the Maine Hospital Association in Augusta.