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## Area hospitals get high marks in patient survey

by: SHANNON MUCHMORE World Staff Writer  
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 Find out how patients rate Tulsa area hospitals.

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Tulsa patients tend to recommend the hospitals they visit, and many of those facilities are at or above average in quality measures such as giving surgery patients the right antibiotics at the right time.

These statistics could help the hospitals with more than just marketing because new federal rules will base some Medicare and Medicaid payments on clinical care and patient satisfaction measures.

The regulations are part of federal health-care reform's move to judge hospitals based on quality of care, rather than the number of patients they see and tests they run.

"Value-based purchasing is a good way to go, and I think it's the future," Hillcrest Medical Center CEO Jason Fahrlander said.

On quality measures such as providing the right antibiotics and stopping or preventing blood clots, Tulsa hospitals were above 90 percent in nearly every category. Oklahoma State University Medical Center was the only one with a lower score. It had 77 percent in outpatients receiving an antibiotic an hour before surgery.

In patient satisfaction surveys, Oklahoma hospitals fared better than the national average in all categories. About 70 percent of patients would recommend their hospital to family and friends, and 69 percent gave a high rating in overall satisfaction, according to the most recent data from the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems survey.

**More than 90 percent of patients surveyed at Southwestern Regional Medical Center and Tulsa Spine & Specialty Hospital would recommend the hospital to others.** On the lower end of Tulsa providers were Hillcrest Medical Center, which 62 percent of patients would recommend, and Southcrest Hospital, with 68 percent, although the hospitals said that percentage has increased in recent reporting periods.

**Terry Woodbeck, CEO of Tulsa Spine & Specialty, said the hospital was built to focus on patient satisfaction, which he said is lacking in other Tulsa hospitals.**

**The facility consistently ranks at the top of Tulsa hospitals in the patient surveys, Woodbeck said, because of a high nurse-to-patient ratio and an overall patient-oriented approach.**

**"The basic premise that we run under is we treat the patient the way we would like to be treated if we were a patient at a hospital," he said.**

**Brenda Hartshorne, who was at the hospital for a hysterectomy, said she felt well taken care of and would definitely recommend the medical center.**

**"You're not a number here," she said. "You're a person."**

Comparing hospitals directly in these surveys can come with a few caveats. Response rates vary, as do hospital size and the number of people surveyed. Hospitals have differing patient populations, and those in more affluent areas are likely to have patients easily contacted by home phone or mail.

The results, however, are what the Center for Medicare and Medicaid will begin using in October to

determine how to allocate an estimated \$850 million in fiscal year 2013. The money given to hospitals for quality care will be taken from Medicare savings, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The surveys are not required of all hospitals, but there are incentives to using them. As of July, more than 3,700 hospitals participated in the survey program, according to the department.

The surveys are conducted by mail or phone on a random sample of adult patients up to six weeks after their discharge following care that included at least one overnight stay. The 27 questions that determine the 10 measures have been publicly reported since March 2008.

The surveys ask about a hospital's cleanliness and quietness, as well as how a patient's pain is managed, whether the patient received help quickly from staff, whether instructions were given upon release, whether staff explained any medicines and how well nurses and doctor communicated.

**In general, Tulsa Spine & Specialty Hospital and Oklahoma Surgical performed well across the board on these measures, never dipping below 70 percent in favorable replies.** Southcrest and Hillcrest fared the lowest among major Tulsa providers, but still rarely went below 50 percent positive ratings.

Southcrest and Hillcrest also consistently had the lowest response rates of hospitals sampled. The largest Tulsa hospitals, St. John Medical Center and St. Francis Hospital, tended to be in the middle of the pack.

Across the state, patients were most pleased with their doctors' communication (83 percent favorable) and least satisfied with how staff explained their medications before administering them (62 percent favorable).

Nationally, people were least happy about the level of noise around patient rooms and how staff explained medicines, and they were generally pleased with nurses, doctors and the information they received about how to recover at home.

Melissa Bogle, marketing director at Southcrest, said the hospital's patient satisfaction scores have been increasing steadily in the past few quarters.

Numbers provided by Southcrest from the first quarter of 2011 - which are not yet publicly available - show an improvement of several percentage points in patient satisfaction surveys on cleanliness and quietness. The percent of people who would recommend the hospital to family and friends increased to nearly 75 percent.

Hillcrest's Fahrlander said his hospital's lower scores in patient satisfaction may be attributed to the fact that the building is older than most hospitals in the area, which can mislead patients. Patients who stay in newer areas of the Hillcrest complex give higher satisfaction scores, he said.

"I don't believe it's difference in quality of care," he said.

The number of patients who rate the hospital highly and the number who would recommend to family and friends have increased by several percentage points since the last reported data, he said.

Fahrlander said he approves of the concept behind linking hospital pay with satisfaction and quality scores, although the data lag and typically low response rates concern him.

"We do focus a lot of energy on making sure we know what our patients' expectations are," he said.

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## Top ratings in patient satisfaction

### How often was the area around patients rooms kept quiet at night?

- Oklahoma average: 64 percent
- National average: 58 percent

### How often did staff explain about medicines before giving them to patients?

- Oklahoma average: 62 percent
- National average: 60 percent

**How often did patients receive help quickly from hospital staff?**

- Oklahoma average: 68 percent
- National average: 64 percent

**How often was patients pain well controlled?**

- Oklahoma average: 72 percent
- National average: 69 percent

**How often were the patients rooms and bathrooms kept clean?**

- Oklahoma average: 73 percent
- National average: 71 percent

**How often did nurses communicate well with patients?**

- Oklahoma average: 77 percent
- National average: 76 percent

**How often did doctors communicate well with patients?**

- Oklahoma average: 83 percent
- National average: 80 percent

**Were patients given information about what to do during their recovery at home?**

- Oklahoma average: 62 percent
- National average: 60 percent

**How do patients rate the hospital overall?**

- Oklahoma average: 69 percent
- National average: 67 percent

**Would patients recommend the hospital to friends and family?**

- Oklahoma average: 70 percent
- National average: 69 percent

*Source: Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems survey*

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**Associated Images:**



**Registered nurse Becky Savastano (right) checks on Brenda Hartshorne, a patient at Tulsa Spine and Specialty Hospital last week. Hartshorne said she is pleased with the care she has received at the hospital. CORY YOUNG / Tulsa World**