

How good is Hilton Head Hospital? Click here to find out

By ALEXIS GARROBO

agarrobo@beaufortgazette.com

843-986-5539

Published Sunday, October 19, 2008

Two area hospitals rank among the top hospitals in the nation for certain types of treatment, according to the 2009 HealthGrades reports released this week.

"The great news for the Beaufort area is that they really have quality health care," said Lauren Galloway, a consultant for HealthGrades, which is one of the most widely used evaluators of hospitals nationwide. HealthGrades evaluates all hospitals. Hospitals cannot opt out.

Beaufort Memorial Hospital is among the top 10 percent of the nation's hospitals for spine surgery and also received a five-star rating for orthopedic care.

However, it received one star, or poor, for treatment of gastrointestinal bleeding, or internal bleeding in the digestive tract.

Hilton Head Hospital received a five-star rating for treatment of gastrointestinal bleeding and gastrointestinal surgeries and is also in the top 5 percent in the country. It received a one-star rating for in-hospital cardiac heart failures, but five stars for heart attack care when patient records were examined six months after they were released from the hospital.

HealthGrades, an independent

Colorado-based company, examined 41 million patient records from 2005 to 2008 based on 28 diagnoses and procedures monitored by Medicare, the only national data set recorded in the same way, according to the company's Web site.

Beaufort Memorial spokeswoman Courtney McDermott said the hospital uses the evaluations to review treatment and evaluate performance.

"I think it's really important that consumers have access to this information," McDermott said. "On the hospital side, it's all about quality. Even if you are a five-star, it doesn't mean your work is done. How do we make sure we keep doing the right thing."

Hilton Head Hospital CEO Elizabeth Lamkin said the hospital uses the evaluations to measure its quality and, if there is an area for improvement, for guidance. She also said the evaluations benefit consumers or patients by creating transparency in health care.

"But one thing I'd say for the consumer is you can't just take a report like this and extrapolate for the whole hospital," she said. "You have to look at specific procedures."

Making the grade

HealthGrades 2009 in-hospital star rankings:

Five stars: Best

Three stars: Performed as expected

One star: Poor

Beaufort Memorial Hospital

No rating: Cholecystectomy

One star: Heart failure and gastrointestinal bleeding

Three stars: Pneumonia, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, stroke, critical care, bowel obstruction, pancreatitis, gastrointestinal surgeries and procedures, carotid surgery, total hip

replacement and hip fracture repair

Five stars: Total knee replacement, neck and back surgery and spinal fusion.

Hilton Head Hospital

No rating: Cholecystectomy

One star: Heart failure

Three stars: Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, pneumonia, stroke, critical care, bowel obstruction, pancreatitis, carotid surgery, total knee replacement, total hip replacement and hip fracture repair.

Five stars: Gastrointestinal bleeding and gastrointestinal surgeries and procedures. Five stars for heart attack care when patient records were examined six months after patients were released from the hospital.