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## Government puts hospital comparisons on Web site

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The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has updated its Web site to give people a way to compare health care providers.

The Web site, [www.hospital-compare.hhs.gov](http://www.hospital-compare.hhs.gov), has information that compares hospitals on common surgical practices and offers feedback on how patients rated the care they received. The department has been releasing health data since 2005, but this is the first year it is providing information on patient feedback.

"This is trying to create a conversation over dinner tables in America and communities on how you choose a hospital," said Kerry Weems, acting administrator of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in a teleconference Tuesday afternoon.

A campaign for the Web site kicks off today with ads in newspapers in all 50 states that include information on those communities' hospitals. The organization spent \$1.9 million on the ads and expects to reach 13 million newspaper readers.

An ad in The State newspaper today lists 32 of the state's hospitals and the percentage of their patients who received antibiotics an hour before surgery and the percentage of people who always received help when they wanted it.

The average percentage of patients receiving antibiotics an hour before surgery in the state is 84 percent, and 60 percent of patients said they always received help when they wanted it.

The Web site has information on 2,521 hospitals across the country and surveyed more than 1 million people. Hospitals submitted information involving surgical procedures and had patients surveyed randomly.

Spartanburg Regional Medical Center, Mary Black Memorial Hospital, Upstate Carolina Medical Center (Gaffney) and Allen Bennett Memorial Hospital (Greer) are included on the Web site.

Randy Nyp, Spartanburg Regional's chief operating officer, said the hospital has been collecting the type of data the study is releasing for at least four years and pays close attention to patient satisfaction.

"We embrace that as part of what we've always done," said Nyp, who considered Regional to have received favorable ratings on the Web site.

According to the Web site, 92 percent of Regional, 91 percent of Mary Black and 92 percent of Upstate Carolina Medical Center patients received preventative antibiotics an hour before surgery. Patients also were asked if they received help as soon as they asked for it.

Sixty-one percent of Regional patients, 58 percent of Mary Black and 48 percent of Upstate Carolina patients said they received help when they asked. In addition, patients were asked about the cleanliness of their rooms and bathrooms and how quiet their rooms were at night.

Weems said the organization decided to release statistics on giving antibiotics an hour before surgery because that's a common practice at many hospitals, and it was important to measure patient satisfaction. Weems said people shouldn't make their health care decisions based just on the stats released. He said data involving pneumonia mortality rates would be included next month, and other data will be added to the Web site throughout the year.

Nyp said the main problem he sees with releasing the data on the Web site is not knowing whether the public understands conditions, such as pneumonia and congestive heart failure.

Nancy White, chief quality officer for Mary Black, said she felt her hospital fared favorably according to the data being released, but it shouldn't be the only information used by hospital customers. "I think it's a good step forward in transparency," White said.

Buzz up!

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