

Thoughts on hospital grading systems

How to Understand the Leapfrog Group grades



By Robert Klugman, MD
Chief Quality Officer, Senior Vice President and Medical Director, Managed Care
UMass Memorial Health Care

In June 2012, the Leapfrog Group, a health care quality watchdog organization formed by large employers, released a patient safety grading system for hospitals in the United States. The letter grades were based on a number of factors, but most heavily weighed hospital participation in their annual survey. Many of the nation's largest and most prestigious hospitals, such as the Cleveland Clinic, Mount Sinai Medical Center, Thomas Jefferson University Hospital and UMass Memorial Medical Center, have chosen to not participate in the Leapfrog survey -- for many different reasons -- and were penalized by Leapfrog as a result. Each of these hospitals, along with 1,200 others, were rated "C" or below by Leapfrog.

The Leapfrog grade given to UMass Memorial Medical Center represents our nonparticipation, not our quality of patient care. Like other organizations, we find the Leapfrog methodology flawed and its report of no value. This has been highlighted by others and even the recent Consumer Reports results conflict with Leapfrog.

The news media has reported about many concerns over the validity of the Leapfrog grades. Please take a look at the links to articles on this page. Even the American Hospital Association commented on the Leapfrog methodology:

"We [AHA] are, and have long been, in favor of sharing good reliable quality information with the public. That said, we find many of these measurements to be unreliable and scientifically invalid, so we think this methodology needs a lot more work before it becomes something the public should actually rely on to guide any of their decision making." Nancy Foster, vice president of quality and patient safety policy, American Hospital Association. Quote from article "By the Letter," written by Jaimy Lee, *Modern Healthcare Magazine*, June 9, 2012

Our commitment to quality and safe patient care speaks for itself. We are acknowledged among the top in the U.S. for cardiac care, critical care and many other areas. The Joint Commission, which oversees quality and safety in almost all U.S. hospitals, and numerous other national accrediting organizations have given us top ratings. We do report to and get scored by a dozen or more rating agencies and share these reports.

It is good for all of us as consumers to have access to important data and information from health care providers, but we need to understand the value of that data and work within national metrics and guidelines to make that data useful when making decisions about health care.

[Big hospitals get – and dispute – poor patient-safety grades from Leapfrog](#) – Wall Street Journal, June 7, 2012

[Lots of "C"s as hospitals get graded for patient safety](#) – Kaiser Health News, June 7, 2012

[Effectiveness, impact of health care report cards debated](#) – Worcester Telegram, July 8, 2012

[Mass. Hospitals receive top marks](#) – Boston Globe, June 6, 2012