



HOLD FOR EMBARGO UNTIL
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Medical Errors Still a Worry; Californians Need to Know How Hospitals Compare Survey Shows Hospitals Making Progress But Still Fall Short in Patient Safety

San Francisco, CA – Every year, more people die from preventable medical mistakes than in car accidents or from breast cancer. A survey released today by the Leapfrog Group and the Pacific Business Group on Health provides comprehensive ratings on California hospitals' patient safety efforts.

"Some hospitals are aggressively putting safety measures in place, while others are slow to adopt them. Patients deserve to know this information so they can make informed decisions about where to seek care," said Peter Lee, president and CEO of the Pacific Business Group on Health. "California hospitals must continue to take steps to make quality data accessible to the public. Information on safety practices, patient experiences, use of our limited health care dollars and other quality data all must become part of how the health care system rewards hospitals."

The 2004 Leapfrog Hospital Quality and Safety Survey is the first study to report hospital performance on the 30 safety practices endorsed by the National Quality Forum (NQF). Results show California hospitals are taking steps to address certain safety concerns, while other safety measures have not been sufficiently put into practice.

- 89% of hospitals *have implemented* procedures to avoid wrong-site surgeries
- 75% of hospitals *have policies* or procedures to avoid surgical infections
- 25% of hospitals *do not meet* the Leapfrog standard regarding hospital worker hand washing with disinfectant before and after seeing a patient
- 50% of hospitals *do not meet* the Leapfrog standard for ensuring patients understand the risks associated with their surgeries
- 80% of hospitals *do not meet* the Leapfrog benchmark for communicating a patient's care information to all treating physicians

Fifty-nine percent of California's urban acute-care hospitals participated in the voluntary survey. The Pacific Business Group on Health, health plans and employers are working together to give Californians access to this important research. Hospital choice tools are now being made available by California health plans to more broadly disclose quality of care information, which promotes hospital accountability for the services they provide.

"PacifiCare makes Leapfrog data available to our members as one component of their framework for choosing a safe and high quality hospital," said Sam Ho, MD, chief medical officer of PacifiCare. "Combined with our other quality measures, the Leapfrog information gives patients the power to select a hospital that is committed to providing safe care. We highly commend hospitals willing to demonstrate their accountability to consumers in the area of patient safety."

"Participating in the Leapfrog survey is just one way that Stanford Hospital is pursuing our goals to provide excellent care and a safe environment for our patients," said Joseph Hopkins, MD, associate chief of staff at Stanford Hospital and Clinics. "We recognize the value of such information to consumers for making informed choices about the care they will receive during a hospital stay."

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About the Leapfrog Hospital Quality and Safety Survey

The Leapfrog Hospital Quality and Safety Survey collects data on a hospital's progress toward implementing practices proven to save lives.

1. **Computerized Physician Order Entry (CPOE):** When physicians use computers and specialty software to enter patient prescriptions and other orders, up to 80% of serious drug errors are prevented. *Despite the significant investment needed to put CPOE into practice, 3% percent of responding hospitals have fully implemented the standard and an additional 12% are making progress toward implementation.*
2. **ICU Physician Staffing (IPS):** By staffing intensive care units with trained ICU specialists (intensivists), hospitals can reduce ICU mortality by 40%. *In California, 19% of responding hospitals with ICUs had fully implemented the ICU physician-staffing standard.*
3. **Evidence-Based Hospital Referral:** Hospitals with significant experience in performing a procedure and that adhere to certain patient care processes are more likely to produce good patient outcomes. *Among responding hospitals that perform these procedures (coronary artery bypass graft, percutaneous coronary interventions, abdominal aortic aneurysm repair, neonatal intensive care, etc.), fewer than a third met the standards that apply to them.*
4. **Leapfrog Quality Index:** Leapfrog scores hospitals' progress on 27 NQF Safe Practices (the three practices listed above complete the set of 30 NQF standards). These practices include safe medication use, following specific care processes and improving the transfer of patient information. *23% of California hospitals scored in the top tier of the Quality Index.*

Survey results for individual hospitals can be found at <http://leapfroggroupdata.org/cp>. General information to help patients prevent medical errors during a hospitalization can be found at the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (www.ahrq.gov/consumer/pathqpack.htm) or Carepointers (www.carepointers.com).

As many as 14,000 Californians die as a result of hospital medical errors. These preventable deaths are greater than the lives claimed in California by car accidents (2,828) and breast cancer (4,000).

The Leapfrog Group

The Leapfrog Group (www.leapfroggroup.org) was founded in November 2000 by the Business Roundtable and has support from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. More than 160 Fortune 500 corporations and other large private and public sector health benefits purchasers have joined The Leapfrog Group, representing more than 34 million enrollees. Since matching a health provider's reimbursement with their performance is a key way to improve the quality of health care, Leapfrog has compiled the first free, online database of programs across the country that offer financial or non-financial rewards and incentives for improved performance. The Leapfrog Incentive and Reward Compendium are available at www.leapfroggroup.org.

Pacific Business Group on Health

Pacific Business Group on Health (www.pbgh.org), a major non-profit coalition of 50 purchasers, is dedicated to improving health care quality and availability while moderating cost. Its members annually spend billions to provide health coverage to approximately 3 million employees, retirees and their families. PBGH seeks to promote health plan and provider accountability and to provide consumers with standardized, comparable data to make the best health care decisions at all levels of care. PBGH also operates PacAdvantage, a small group purchasing pool providing health insurance to employees and their families in thousands of small employer groups in California.

Medstat

Medstat (www.medstat.com) provides data collection, analysis, and support services to The Leapfrog Group for the Hospital Quality and Safety Survey. Medstat is a healthcare information company that provides market intelligence and benchmark databases, decision support solutions, and research services for managing the cost and quality of healthcare. The company applies these capabilities to improve policy and management decision making for many of the nation's leading employers, government agencies, health plans, hospitals and provider networks, and pharmaceutical companies. Medstat is a business within the Thomson Corporation (www.thomson.com).

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