

COMMENTARY // Medicare

Medicare site provides hospital comparisons

By David Sayen
Special to the Acorn

You've probably read a restaurant guide or review before going out for a special dinner. And you've probably scanned a consumer review or two before buying a new or used car. Wouldn't it be great if there was a place where you could get information on the quality of hospitals in your area?

Well, there is. It's called Hospital Compare, and you can find it on the Medicare website, www.medicare.gov.

Hospital Compare contains a wealth of information on how well hospitals perform certain surgeries and treat certain medical conditions. The data varies from hospital to hospital because the reality is that some hospitals do a better job of caring for patients with certain conditions than others.

The idea behind Hospital Compare is that making quality-of-care information easily available to the public will motivate hospitals to improve their care. Medicare has similar "compare" websites for nursing homes, home health agencies and dialysis facilities, too.

You can search Hospital Compare by ZIP code, city or state. The data you'll find are intended to provide a snapshot of the quality of care at about 4,000 hospitals throughout the U.S. And you don't have to be a Medicare

beneficiary to use Hospital Compare; it's open to everyone free of charge.

If you're having a medical emergency, go to the nearest hospital. Get care as fast as you can. But if you're planning to have surgery or if you have a condition like heart disease and you know you'll need hospital care in the future, talk to your doctor about the local hospital that best meets your needs. Find out which hospitals your doctor works with and which hospitals they think give the best care for your condition. If you're a Medicare beneficiary, ask if the hospitals participate in Medicare.

At that point, you may want to spend some time on Hospital Compare. The website shows the rates at which hospitals provide recommended care for patients being treated for heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia, children's asthma and for patients having surgery.

It also displays information on hospital outcome measures. These include the rate at which Medicare patients who were treated for heart attack, heart failure and pneumonia had to be readmitted to the hospital with complications, and 30-day risk-adjusted death rates. The 30-day



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period is used because this is the time period when deaths are most likely to be related to the care patients received in the hospital.

In addition, you can see results from patient satisfaction surveys, such as how well patients thought the hospital controlled their pain and how well doctors and nurses communicated with them.

Hospital Compare is no substitute for talking with your doctor and family members and friends who've been treated at a hospital you're considering, but the website can give you a general idea of how well various hospitals handle certain kinds of patients.

How can you find information about Medicare coverage of hospital services? Original Medicare helps cover certain medical services and supplies in hospitals. If you have both Medicare Part A (hospital insurance) and Medicare Part B (medical insurance), you can get the full range of Medicare-covered services in a hospital.

If you're in a Medicare Advantage Plan like an HMO or PPO or other Medicare health plan, read your plan materials. These plans provide all your Part A and Part B coverage. If you're in a Medicare Advantage plan or other health plan, Hospital Compare doesn't have information about whether your care will be covered in a certain hospital, so

check with your plan.

For more information about Medicare-covered hospital services, look at your "Medicare & You" handbook that's delivered in the fall each year to all people with Medicare, view it at <http://go.usa.gov/iDJ> or call (800) 633-4227. TTY users should

call (877) 486-2048.

David Sayen is Medicare's regional administrator for Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada and the Pacific Territories. You can get answers to Medicare questions by visiting www.Medicare.gov or calling the above numbers.

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COMMENTARY // Aye eye, doc

The latest in eye surgery options

By Rajesh Khanna
Special to the Acorn

Q: Are there newer alternatives to Lasik in 2016?

A: Yes, there are newer alternatives to Lasik eye surgery: implantable collamer lens (ICL), Kamra inlay, superficial Lasik, PIE (presbyopic implant in eye) and topography-guided laser vision correction.

Q: What is ICL? When can it be used?

A: The most common indication is for people with high nearsightedness, those people with thick "coke-bottle" glasses.

ICL is a soft lens similar to a contact lens. It is implanted between the colored part and the natural lens of the eye. You do not have to remove the lens. It sits inside your eye.

This short, painless procedure restores vision quickly. A person ends up seeing better than they did with glasses.

The procedure can also be performed when the cornea is too thin or abnormal and therefore not suitable for laser vision correction.

Q: What is Kamra inlay? Am I a candidate?

A: Kamra inlay is for people between 45 and 60 who want to avoid reading glasses. A small colored disc is placed inside the superficial cornea. It increases the depth of field.

The patient will have im-

proved near and middle vision and will retain their far vision.

Q: What is superficial Lasik?

A: Lasik requires designing a flap in the cornea. The thickness of this flap varies from 100 to 200 microns. (A micron is a thousandth of a



Dr. Khanna

want to free themselves from all glasses.

In this age group, Lasik only delivers distance vision or, as an option, monovision, where one eye is for far and the other near.

PIE allows each eye to see at all distances. Here is the best part: You will never develop cataracts once you have PIE.

Q: What is topography-guided laser vision correction?

A: Lasik cannot be performed if the cornea is deformed. In that case, a laser guided by the shape, or topography, of the cornea can be used to treat vision problems.

Q: I have had radial keratotomy to correct nearsightedness. Can I have surgery to see better?

A: Yes there are a few options. Laser vision correction, PIE or a combination of the two may be required.

Q: What is the latest treatment method for keratoconus?

A: Keratoconus is distorted, blurred vision caused by irregularities in the cornea. Using Intacs implants to reshape the cornea and the application of liquid riboflavin to strengthen it are minimally invasive treatments. They improve vision without hard contact lenses or a cornea transplant.

For more information, call Khanna Vision at (805) 230-2126, email lasik@khannainstitute.com or visit www.KhannaVision.com.

Kamra inlay is for people between 45 and 60 who want to avoid reading glasses. It increases the depth of field

millimeter.)

In superficial Lasik, a special instrument called an epikeratome fashions an ultra-thin 50-micron flap. Therefore, this procedure is best for thinner corneas and for people who participate in contact sports or who have dry eyes.

Q: What is PIE? How is it better than Lasik?

A: PIE is short for presbyopic implant in the eye. It is best for people over 45 who

City's Council on Aging Goes to the Dogs

The City of Thousand Oaks Council on Aging presents

"Dogs and Cats and Birds, Oh My!"

Wednesday, February 3, 2016 • 1:00 pm
Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza Boardroom

Keynote speaker Tara Diller is the Director of Ventura County Animal Services and a dynamic speaker with a passion for changing the face of municipal shelters. Diller will discuss why pets are important in our lives as we age, caring for pets in apartments, how to handle the costs involved in pet care, dealing with the loss of a pet, volunteer opportunities, and a program titled "Seniors for Seniors."

This presentation is part of the Council on Aging's monthly televised speaker series. All citizens are invited to attend and encouraged to share concerns or suggestions during the Public Comment period.

Free parking is available in the Civic Arts Plaza Parking Structure.

This meeting will be broadcast live on TOTV and on the City's website at: www.toaks.org/cityvideos.asp

For more information, please visit: www.toaks.org/seniors



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