



THE 2022 HEALTHGRADES SPECIALTY EXCELLENCE REPORT

The Continuing Importance of Quality



Throughout this past year, the COVID-19 crisis has continued to make headlines, and unfortunately, is still affecting many health systems across various parts of the country.

Hospitals are facing unprecedented staffing and resource challenges amidst a recent rise in case volume, jeopardizing their ability to continue providing key services. While temporary, the situation underscores the importance of patients being able to access information about the quality of care provided at their chosen hospital. Quality of care can often make the difference between a smooth recovery versus a lengthy one with an extended admission hampered by complications, or even life and death.

Healthgrades understands the new and unique challenges hospitals are facing as they try to provide all patients with the best care possible. As consumers place even greater emphasis on quality in these unprecedented times, they no longer assume that their local hospital is the best choice for their procedure or condition.



The **Healthgrades 2022 Specialty Excellence Awards™** and ratings can provide consumers with important information and transparency on the best places to seek care in a given area or community.

Understanding how well a hospital performs in specific care areas helps them find the best care for their needs and can help mitigate risk from a procedure. For hospitals, the awards and ratings offer a useful roadmap for solidifying and strengthening areas of care.

This analysis from Healthgrades is important because it provides independent, impartial ratings of hospital quality. We analyze the performance of nearly 4,500 hospitals as measured by risk-adjusted mortality and complication rates that account for both sicker patients and riskier procedures. The data indicates clinical outcomes differ dramatically among hospitals in the top and bottom of the Healthgrades hospital performance categories. Patients treated at a hospital receiving a 5-star rating have, on average, a lower risk of a complication or mortality than if treated at a hospital receiving a 1-star rating in that procedure or condition.



5-Star, 3-Star, and 1-Star Hospitals: *The differences are considerable.*

Central to our mission is providing trusted, actionable information about the care delivered at our nation's hospitals. The Healthgrades star ratings are based on comparing a hospital's actual performance to its expected performance based on a methodology that incorporates risk adjustment for patient illness.

Our recent assessment of 31 of the most common procedures and conditions in the country shows that:

From 2018 through 2020*

If all hospitals, as a group, performed similarly to 5-star rated hospitals

218,141 LIVES
potentially could have been saved

156,050 PATIENTS
potentially could have avoided complications

A New Award for Surgical Excellence

This year Healthgrades has created a **Specialty Excellence Award for Surgical Care**. This award recognizes superior clinical outcomes in surgical care across 15 of the most common in-hospital surgical procedures including cardiac, vascular, prostate, gastrointestinal, spine, and joint replacement surgeries. The 150 recipients of the 2022 Healthgrades Surgical Care Excellence Award represent the top 10% of hospitals in the nation for overall surgical excellence.

Additionally, to underscore and recognize the performance of the nation's Best Hospitals for Surgical Care, Healthgrades has recognized the top performers as **America's 50 Best Hospitals for Surgical Care**. The 50 hospitals have truly distinguished themselves for extraordinary surgical care.



*From 2018-2020, patients treated at hospitals receiving the **Surgical Care Specialty Excellence Award** have, on average:*

29.8%↓
LOWER RISK

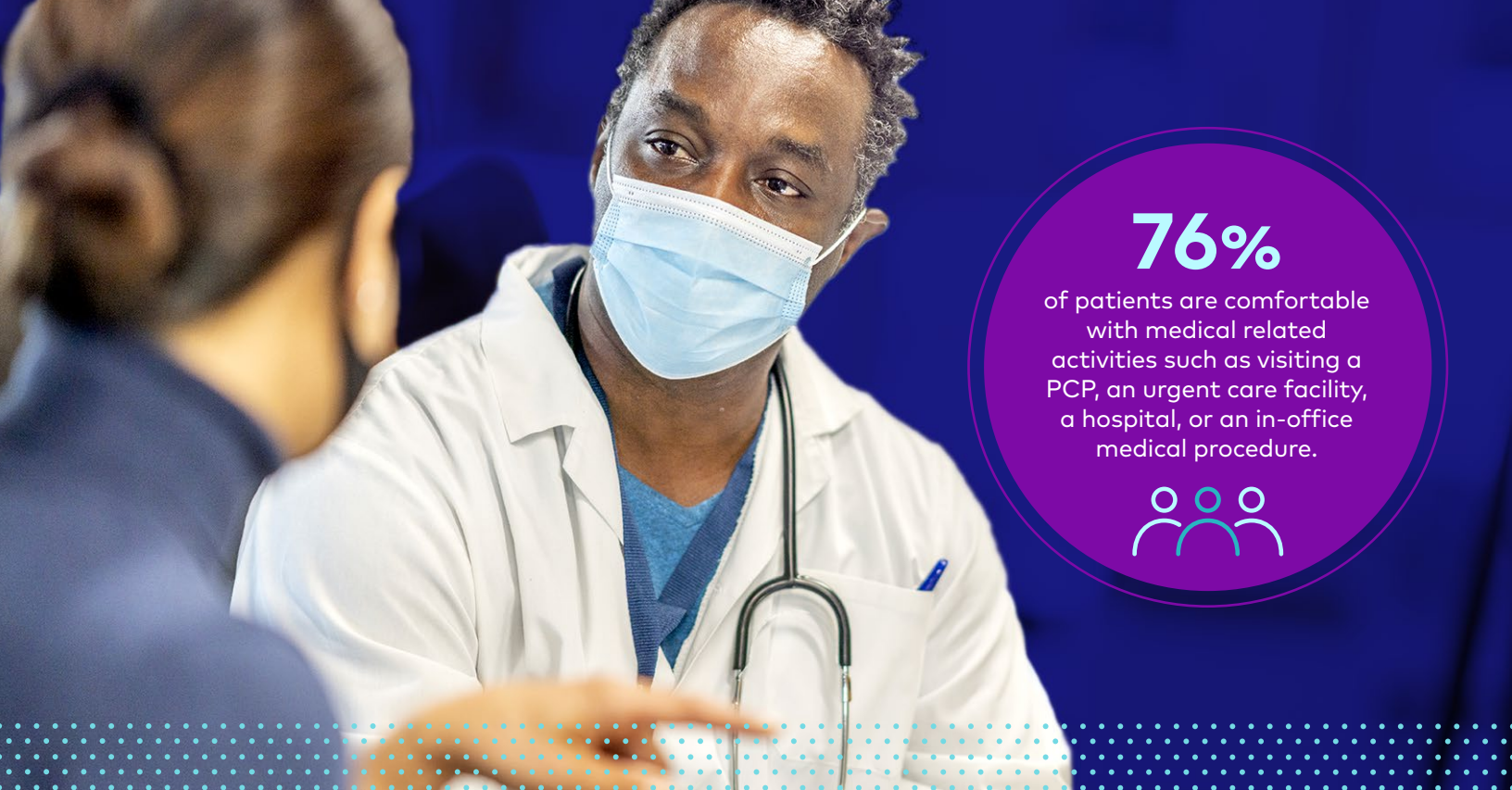
of experiencing a complication or dying while in the hospital than if they were treated in hospitals that did not receive the award.*



*From 2018-2020, patients treated at hospitals receiving the **America's 50 Best Hospitals for Surgical Care Award** have, on average:*

34%↓
LOWER RISK

of experiencing a complication or dying while in the hospital than if they were treated in hospitals that did not receive the award.*



76%

of patients are comfortable with medical related activities such as visiting a PCP, an urgent care facility, a hospital, or an in-office medical procedure.



Are Consumers Confident Enough to Seek Care?

Since the pandemic began, Healthgrades has been conducting an ongoing, weekly examination of current consumer sentiments and expectations. Our [Healthgrades COVID-19 Patient Confidence Study](#) reveals the following:

Although the Delta variant has recently impacted patient confidence, overall confidence has dramatically increased since the early days of the pandemic.

- **83% of consumers would be comfortable seeing a PCP for treatment tomorrow, a significant increase from the pandemic low point of 41% in April 2020.**
- **64% of consumers would be comfortable going to a hospital for a procedure, up from a low of 43% in June 2020.**

This is in sharp contrast to the significant decline in consumer confidence caused by the Delta variant for more "everyday" activities, where 44% of people feel comfortable flying on an airplane and 43% are ok with going to a public event like a concert or sporting event.



Consumers Care About Quality More Than Ever

As patients have become more active participants in their own health, they seek to learn more about hospital quality and how hospital selection can impact their care. Healthgrades encourages patients to stay invested in their healthcare by being more aware of their health risks and preexisting conditions, and by learning more about how they can mitigate some of those risks through hospital and physician selection.

In other words, quality is no longer the sole responsibility of hospitals and providers. Patients are doing their part, too; actively looking for more information on hospital and provider quality and putting a premium on quality of care in their healthcare decisions. The importance that consumers place on quality of care when choosing a healthcare facility has grown rapidly during the pandemic, outpacing criteria such as condition expertise, travel time required, insurance acceptance, and procedure competency. Sixty percent of consumers say quality of care is a more important factor in selecting a hospital now than it was before the pandemic*. In the current and future healthcare environment, a continued focus on quality and quality improvement is more critical than ever.



Healthgrades evaluates all hospitals across 31 specialties, plus six additional specialties (four for women's care, plus appendectomy and bariatric surgery) in 16 states with available data.

Our Methodology

Healthgrades has the most rigorous, impartial, inclusive, and clinically focused methodology in the healthcare industry. To help empower patients and inform hospitals, we evaluate the performance of all hospitals annually, based solely on what matters most to patients — patient outcomes for the most common procedures and conditions. Hospitals cannot opt-in or out of the assessment process and there is no outside influence on the results, such as reputation or financial performance. Our commitment to providing consumers and hospitals with vital information is further evidenced by our detailed ratings covering more than twice as many specialties as other organizations. Healthgrades evaluates all hospitals across 31 specialties, plus six additional specialties (four for women's care, plus appendectomy and bariatric surgery) in 16 states with available data. The annual analysis is compiled from more than 45 million Medicare medical claims for the most recent three-year period available. [View our full methodology here.](#)



How COVID data affects our methodology

In 2020, the global pandemic changed healthcare, including how and when healthcare was delivered and, in many cases, not delivered or delayed. This changed the MedPAR data set with the data showing volume drops in many areas and volume spikes in others (e.g., COVID-19 admissions). After examining the effects to the data set caused by the pandemic, Healthgrades chose to make two changes to our methodology:

First, Healthgrades excluded any case that had a diagnosis of COVID in the 2020 data year (January 1 through September 30, 2020). Since Healthgrades cannot currently adequately risk adjust for the presence of COVID patients, we made the decision to exclude them.

Second, there are certain Healthgrades cohorts that had substantial drops in volume due to how COVID changed the practice of medicine during the pandemic (e.g., cancelling elective surgeries, or patients not coming in for fear of COVID transmission). While in general, our methodology delineates that a hospital must have 30 total Medicare inpatient cases over three years and five cases in the most recent data year, we changed that threshold for four cohorts this year due to loss of volume.

We will continue to evaluate the impact of the pandemic on the data and to make changes as necessary to ensure Healthgrades ratings continue to reflect accurate statistical and clinical outcomes.

About Healthgrades

Healthgrades is the leading marketplace to find and connect with the right doctor, the right hospital and the right care. Half of Americans who visit a doctor this year will visit Healthgrades as part of their healthcare journey. Healthgrades makes healthcare more accessible and transparent for consumers by differentiating providers based on patient satisfaction, physician experience and hospital outcomes.

The search for the right care starts at Healthgrades.

Healthgrades is part of RV Health, a Red Ventures business, which has the largest consumer health and wellness audience online across its brand portfolio including Healthline.com, Healthgrades.com, MedicalNewsToday.com, Greatist.com, and PsychCentral.com. Each month, RV Health helps more than 100 million unique visitors live their strongest and healthiest lives. RV Health employs more than 700 people across San Francisco, New York City, Charlotte, Denver, Atlanta and more.

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[Read more](#) for detailed information regarding our methodology, data sources, inclusion and exclusion criteria, risk-adjustment models, model statistics, and odds ratios.

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Contact us at quality@healthgrades.com

