



Wyoming Hospital Association

NEWS BRIEFS

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CMS Star Ratings Refresh Expected This Month, Bigger Changes Possible in 2021

In July 2016, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) began to report an overall star rating reflecting performance on nearly 60 Hospital Compare measures. At the time, the AHA with other hospital associations, the majority of Congress and many other stakeholders voiced significant concerns about the accuracy and meaningfulness of the ratings, and urged CMS not to publish the ratings unless and until they could be improved. Nevertheless, CMS published the ratings.

In 2017, further analyses identified issues with the execution of CMS's chosen methodology. CMS temporarily suspended star ratings, proposed several technical updates to its methodology and posted revised ratings in December 2017.

CMS planned to update the ratings again in July 2018 using the same methodology. However, hospitals reported hard-to-explain shifts in their performance that could not be explained by changes in underlying measure performance. As a result, CMS postponed the update to allow for further analysis and input, and re-published the ratings in February 2019. Since then, CMS has made only modest changes to the methodology, and as a result, the overall distribution of star ratings for January 2020 will be similar.

The talking points below may be helpful in responding to inquiries about your star ratings.

- Hospitals have been pioneers in quality measurement, and have long shared safety and quality data with the public because patients and their families need clear information to make health care decisions.
- When making health care decisions, patients should use all available tools at their disposal, such as talking with friends and family and consulting with doctors, nurses and other health care providers.
- The measures included in the ratings were never intended to create a single, representative score of hospital quality. Furthermore, the ratings often do not reflect the aspects of care most relevant to a particular patient's needs. Thus, arbitrary choices of measures and methodology have far too much impact on how a hospital is rated.
- Some measures in star ratings lack sociodemographic adjustment, which biases the ratings against those hospitals caring for poorer patients. Two thirds of a hospital's star rating is based on readmissions, patient experience and mortality measures. A body of literature shows these measures can be influenced by sociodemographic factors (e.g., income, insurance status) beyond hospitals' control. We believe sociodemographic adjustment must be incorporated into these measures before they are used for star ratings
- There is limited "line of sight" between ratings and underlying measures, which severely limits the usefulness of the ratings for quality improvement. Hospitals do not know what rating they will get – or how well they need to score on individual measures to achieve a particular star rating – until after CMS applies its complex LVM and clustering approaches and provides them with preview reports. Simply put, hospitals cannot achieve a target they cannot see.
- CMS is one of a number of organizations that provides reports and rankings of hospital performance. As with any report cards or ratings, each must be interpreted in context, and it is unlikely any one report card will provide a robust and reliable portrait of quality in a hospital. For example, some of the data used to calculate hospital grades can be years old, and may not reflect more recent performance improvement efforts. In addition, not all measures apply to all patients, which can matter when report cards are used as the primary tool to select a hospital for a specific procedure.

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North Big Horn Hospital Car Raffle

North Big Horn Hospital Foundation is holding a raffle for a 1941 Chevy Classic Coupe. All proceeds from the raffle will benefit the New Horizons Care Center. The classic car was donated by the LaMoine Sorenson family in his memory.

According to Hospital Foundation Director Janet Koritnik only 250 tickets will be sold before the winning ticket is drawn. The drawing will take place once all tickets are sold or at the foundation's annual fundraising event to be held in the spring.

The vehicle has all original parts. The only upgrade in recent years is a new paint job in the same color as the original – black. According to the family, the vehicle has been garaged most of the 30 years it was in

LaMoine's possession and saw very little use.

One unique feature of the car is a bench, in place of a traditional back seat. Craig said his father talked about using a similar vehicle in his younger days to go on hunting trips be-

cause the bench was handy for that purpose. Vehicles with this feature are often referred to as the "business coupe," since it was often used by salesmen to transport their wares.



Department Seeking Creative Healthcare Solutions

The Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) is seeking applications for creative healthcare solutions meant to help address certain common healthcare challenges found in Wyoming.

The Wyoming Legislature made a one-time appropriation of \$1 million last year for a healthcare innovation studies project. WDH was tasked with setting rules, selecting from applicants and administering the fund.

Studies hoping for support from the fund must have at least one of

the following goals:

- Reduce costs associated with long-term care, chronic disease or other healthcare services to the state of Wyoming
- Allow individuals in need of long-term care to remain in their homes and communities
- Develop necessary long-term care or other healthcare services in Wyoming
- Use broadband internet

to access healthcare services

The department is accepting applications for the project, which must be received by June 30. More information about the project and the selection process, along with application details and forms, can be found at <https://health.wyo.gov/admin/dupre/health-care-innovation-studies/>.

UPL Update

We would like to provide an update on the new physician/provider UPL. All the information has finally been delivered to Navigant for them to complete the modeling and calculations and to provide the state what it needs to prepare the State Plan Amendment (SPA).

We were informed the WDH believes Navigant will have their work done, and the state will

have the SPA ready for submittal to CMS by the end of February.

The contracts have been delayed due to three significant changes in the process. A new Contract Manager, a new Attorney General and moving to five year contracts. It has certainly been a learning experience for all, but we are in the home stretch.

The benefit of moving to five year contracts will be no new contracts will need to be processed or signed during the five year period. The speed of the communication will be significantly increased and therefore the speed of payment will be increased.