



April 15, 2016

The Honorable Andy Slavitt, Acting Administrator  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
7500 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Acting Director Slavitt:

We are writing to commend the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for developing Hospital Star Ratings, which will be a valued and important tool for consumers looking to make informed choices about their hospital care. We urge the agency to move as quickly as possible to complete and post these Star Ratings on Hospital Compare, so consumers can begin benefitting from them.

There is no time to waste. Every day, consumers in every corner of our nation make choices about what hospitals to use, for themselves and for family members. CMS has made a laudable commitment to making hospital quality transparent to the public – a commitment that has continued under numerous agency leaders. The Star Ratings are the logical and badly needed next step in that work, and will allow consumers to see a summary score and overall grade that can guide them as they make essential choices about the hospitals at which they will seek care.

Consumers have come to rely on such ratings for services of all kinds, and are increasingly sophisticated about understanding and using them. We should not delay making the same kind of easily useable information available to consumers who are making important health care decisions. The Hospital Star Ratings program will provide summary scores and star ratings based on 60 quality measures. Very importantly, this composite information will be weighted to emphasize results from the kinds of measures that are of greatest interest to consumers: outcomes measures (addressing mortality, readmissions and safety); and patient experience measures. Consumers who want more details can drill down to look at the 60 individual measures from which the composite is derived. We commend CMS for committing to this level of transparency and publication of underlying data on Hospital Compare. We strongly encourage you to be fully transparent in posting the methodology, including risk adjustment calculations, for hospitals and consumers alike.

We are aware that there is ongoing research examining the application of risk adjustment to measures used in this composite. Already that research has produced ample evidence that risk adjustment for socioeconomic status has little impact on hospitals' performance on these measures. We therefore do not believe there is reason to delay implementation of the Hospital Star Ratings. Should future research produce new information, then adjustments to the Star Ratings methodology could be made.

Once again, we commend CMS for developing the Hospital Compare Star Ratings and urge rapid implementation. This represents a significant step forward in helping consumers make value based decisions about their health care.

Thank you for considering our position.

Sincerely,

Leah Binder  
President & CEO  
The Leapfrog Group