

## National hospital ratings systems share few common scores and may generate confusion instead of clarity.

November 3, 2015

Austin M, Jha AK, Romano PS, et al. National hospital ratings systems share few common scores and may generate confusion instead of clarity. *Health Aff (Millwood)*. 2015;34(3):423-430.

doi:10.1377/hlthaff.2014.0201.

<https://psnet.ahrq.gov/issue/national-hospital-ratings-systems-share-few-common-scores-and-may-generate-confusion-instead>

---

One strategy to improve patient safety is [public reporting](#) of performance data, and hospital quality ratings have proliferated. In this study, researchers examined the extent of agreement among hospital ratings issued by *U.S. News & World Report*, [HealthGrades](#), [The Leapfrog Group](#), and *Consumer Reports*. Each rating system has a different emphasis, varying inclusion and exclusion criteria, and focuses on different measures of quality. There is very little agreement among the ratings for either high or low performance—not one hospital was rated as a top performer across all four ratings—which makes these ratings challenging for consumers to interpret or use in decision making. These findings are consistent with prior work demonstrating variability in [surgical quality rankings](#). The authors call for transparency in how ratings are constructed and clear communication with consumers to facilitate informed decisions regarding their care. A recent AHRQ WebM&M [interview](#) with Leah Binder, President and CEO of The Leapfrog Group, explored the development of the [Hospital Safety Score](#) and [Leapfrog Hospital Survey](#).