

WHAT IS QUALITY?

A Case Study

GNYHA/UHF Clinical Quality Fellowship Program: March 14, 2024

You have just returned from your Primary Care Physician's office, and following consultation with a Vascular Surgeon, they are both in agreement that you need to have a lower extremity revascularization procedure, which carries a small risk of limb loss and death.

You are deciding between Hospital A and Hospital B. You want to have the procedure at the highest quality facility, and to have it performed by the highest quality Vascular Surgery team.

Your Primary Care Physician says that both Hospital A and B are equivalent in her view, though Hospital A is starting to charge annual medical staff dues, which really annoys her. Both hospitals are covered by your insurance, have identical co-payments and coinsurance for the procedure, and are located the same distance away. However, each hospital has its own Vascular Surgery team. You only have the information below on Hospitals A and B, to help you make your choice.

HOSPITAL A AND ITS VASCULAR SURGERY TEAM

Hospital A's website notes that it has both Surgery and Heart and Vascular Centers of Excellence. The site states that the six-physician team performs "hundreds" of vascular surgery procedures a year. It is accredited by The Joint Commission.

The Hospital has 750 beds, and was recently ranked by *US News and World Report* as having one of the top 50 Cardiology and Heart Surgery programs in the country. *US News and World Report* does not have Vascular Surgery specialty rankings. You check the *HealthGrades* website, and out of five stars, the hospital received five stars for Vascular procedures, based upon mortality data from 3 years ago. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) *Hospital Compare* website gives the hospital four stars (out of five), and its Leapfrog Safety Grade is a "B."

The Hospital's website notes that the Vascular Surgery physician team members are all board-certified, have been educated at prominent medical schools, and have completed residencies at major academic centers. The hospital supports residency programs in General Surgery, a Vascular Surgery fellowship, and participates in a number of research studies. You visit the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) *Physician Profile* site and find that one of the physicians in the group had a malpractice judgment in 2019, but there are no details. You visit the CMS *Physician Compare* website. It notes that all physicians participate in Medicare "Innovative Payment Models," and lists quality scores for the MDs on several measures that are all two to four stars (out of five).

You recently read a front-page news story on an adverse event at Hospital A, where the wrong patient underwent a CT scan, and received intravenous contrast causing an allergic reaction. The patient is now well, but is filing a lawsuit. In the same issue of the paper, you saw an ad from Hospital A, which was focused on their use of cutting-edge technologies, including a new robot for prostate surgery, and 3-D tomosynthesis for breast cancer screening.

The only person you know who received care at Hospital A is your Aunt Millie, who had her gall bladder removed there a few years ago. She does not remember who her doctors were, but that she had a nice

experience because the nurses were great. She said that the hospital lobby was nice, and that she had the best cup of Manhattan clam chowder while she was hospitalized.

HOSPITAL B AND ITS VASCULAR SURGERY TEAM

Hospital B's website notes that it has both Surgery and Heart and Vascular Centers of Excellence. The site states that their four-physician team has been in place and performing vascular surgery procedures for over a decade together. It is accredited by The Joint Commission.

The Hospital has 450 beds, and you cannot find any mention of a *US News and World Report* ranking. You check the *HealthGrades* website, and note that out of five stars, the hospital has received three stars for Vascular procedures, based on mortality data from 3 years ago. It has proudly earned designation as a Magnet Hospital from the American Nurses Credentialing Center. The CMS *Hospital Compare* website gives the hospital three stars (out of five). Its Leapfrog Safety Grade is an "A."

The hospital's website notes that the Vascular team members are all board-certified. From looking at their qualifications on the web, four of the physicians have trained at prominent residency programs. However, two went to foreign medical schools you have never heard of, one of which is in a country you have never heard of. The hospital supports a large residency program in General Surgery, but no Vascular Surgery fellowship. The hospital website notes that the group has authored dozens of research papers on Vascular Surgery care.

You cannot find specific quality information on the NYS DOH *Physician Profile* site. The CMS *Physician Compare* website notes that all physicians participate in "Electronic Health Record Technology," and lists quality star scores for the MDs ranging from two to five stars (out of five). You find a patient rating on *Yelp*, where a patient gave the physician group practice two stars out of five. The patient's rationale was that he had to wait "way too long" to be seen, and that the copy of *People* magazine in the waiting room was from the late 1990s.

You speak to a neighbor who is a Family Medicine physician. She has not had adverse outcomes among the three patients she has referred to Hospital B for Vascular procedures, has never referred a patient to Hospital A, and notes that her colleagues think Hospital B's team is strong. However, she said that the patients she has referred to Hospital B have said that the Vascular Surgery office design was very dated—far too much Formica® in their view.

The hospital website states that Hospital B has cable TV with free channels including free *HBO*, free *Netflix* streaming, and has a brand-new canine therapy program. Each patient can be seen by a dog within 24 hours of admission. The website has a picture of their newest French bulldog, "Bolus."

***There is No More Information.
Which Hospital and Team do You Choose--and Why?***