

Consumer-Purchaser ALLIANCE

Better information. Better decisions. Better health care.

June 19, 2018

Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Delayed July 2018 Update to Overall Hospital Star Ratings

Dear Ms. Verma:

We are writing to urge the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to release the July 2018 update to the Overall 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 update these Star Ratings on *Hospital Compare* with the most recently collected hospital performance data, so consumers can benefit and make decisions based on the most relevant data available.

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 increasing hospital quality transparency— a commitment that is foundationally important to other CMS initiatives that aim to promote value in the health care system. For example, it is not appropriate to ask consumers to bear a significant proportion of health care costs (e.g., through high-deductible health plans or consumer-directed health plans, value-based insurance design) without requiring providers to make cost and quality information transparent to the public.

Health care consumers have a right to information about the quality of care they are receiving. The Star Ratings are the logical and badly needed next step in that work and we should not delay making easily useable information available to consumers who are making important health care decisions. We are aware that there is ongoing debate around the appropriate methodology to produce the Star Ratings. However, we do not believe there is reason to delay the July 2018 update to the Star Ratings with the most recently available measure data. Moreover, it is critical that CMS solicits input from consumers and purchasers – those who rely on the ratings to make important healthcare decisions – to ensure the ratings are easily understandable and reflect the priorities of the end-users of the health care system.

Once again, we strongly urge CMS to update the Hospital Compare Star Ratings with the most recently available data as soon as possible. This represents a significant step forward in helping consumers make value-based decisions about their health care.

www.consumerpurchaser.org

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The Consumer-Purchaser Alliance is a collaboration of leading consumer, employer and labor groups working together to promote health care transformation that leads to better health outcomes, better care experience and more effective use of our health care dollars.

Thank you for considering our position.

Sincerely,



Debra L. Ness
President
National Partnership for Women & Families
Co-Chair, Consumer-Purchaser Alliance



William E. Kramer
Executive Director for Health Policy
Pacific Business Group on Health
Co-Chair, Consumer-Purchaser Alliance

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