

A National Market for Surgery

Increasingly, the quality data your hospital gathers and generates through claims is being used by employers, insurers, and benefits consultants. And that data is beginning to drive where patients go for specialized surgery—and that could be outside the local market.

“There has been the premise that health care will continue to be delivered locally,” says Shane Wolverton, a senior vice president with Comparion Medical Analytics, Inc.

Now, he says, in certain areas and for some elective procedures, surgical programs are going to be competing on a regional or even national basis.

The firm developed the CareChex Quality Rating System that BridgeHealth and others use to select top-performing centers. The database uses sophisticated software to create a composite quality score and rating that uses risk-adjusted outcomes as well as process and patient satisfaction measures to identify the centers with the best results.

“Employers are going to be putting plans in place that actually pull patients out of the markets they reside in and steer them toward providers they believe deliver the same or better quality at a better rate,” Wolverton says.

He offers this advice for OR managers and directors:

- Understand how your surgery program is being assessed and learn what methods are being used. (See how your hospital ranks at CareChex.com and learn more about the methodology at ComparionAnalytics.com.)
- Take advantage of these databases internally to analyze and improve your own performance. Many hospitals subscribe to databases that enable them to conduct this type of analysis.

Good news: Your hospital doesn't need a national reputation to shine. Hospitals that pop up as leaders in CareChex aren't necessarily those with brand identity. Employers may find they can get high-value care from regional and even local providers.

For example, the top quality performer nationally for coronary artery bypass is TriStar Centennial Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee. For joint replacements, it is the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City, and for spinal surgery, it is Sinai Hospital of Baltimore in Maryland.

Employers, employees, and individuals can search these databases to see where the stars are.

“There will be winners and losers,” Thomas Emerick of Emerick Consulting says. “The hospitals that are outstanding can become destinations. Those that aren't may not get as many patients.” ❖

—Pat Patterson

References

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