



Cleanliness, staff earn hospital high marks but communication found lacking

By Andrew Oxford

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New federal ratings of hospitals across the country reveal patients at Holy Cross find the rooms clean and staff responsive but information lacking when it comes to medications or what to do once discharged.

Holy Cross Hospital earned three stars out of five in a new rating system based on patient satisfaction surveys compiled by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

In one indication of overall satisfaction, 70 percent of Holy Cross patients said they would definitely recommend the 29bed facility while 62 percent of respondents around New Mexico said they would certainly recommend the facility where they were treated. Nationally, 71 percent of patients said they would definitely recommend the hospital where they received care. But the hospital earned lower marks on communication with patients.

One of five patients surveyed said staff sometimes or never explained medications before giving them.

Patients seemed to leave the hospital with questions, too. Fifty-one percent of patients surveyed strongly agreed when asked if they understood their care when discharged but one out of five said they were not given information about what to do during their recovery at home. That's more than the national average of 14 percent and the state average of 17 percent.

Maria Meadowcroft, a spokesperson for Taos Health Systems, said the organization has taken a number of steps to improve communication with patients after they are discharged.

The hospital has partnered with Taos County Emergency Medical Services to visit patients identified as being at high risk for readmission, Meadowcroft said.

Staff also call patients at home to assure they are taking medications appropriately, have made follow-up appointments with primary-care providers and answer any questions they may have, she added.

Planning for discharge often not only includes patients but family members and caregivers, too, Meadowcroft explained.

Staff are trained to review medications with patients and encourage them to “teach back” what

they learned.

The hospital's employees received relatively high marks.

Holy Cross ranked above the national average in the percentage of patients who said they always received help as soon as they wanted.

Eighty percent of patients said doctors always communicated well at Holy Cross — right in between state and national averages. Seventy-six percent of respondents said nurses always communicated well, on par with the state average.

“In the midst of difficult times all the employees are pulling together to make this a better hospital and it shows,” said Martha Jaramillo, a nurse and officer in the union representing health care workers at Holy Cross. “We have dedicated front line staff who are working extremely hard.”

But New Mexico's statewide ratings are not exactly something to be proud of.

Only 65 percent of those surveyed in New Mexico said they would rate the hospital where they were treated a nine or 10 on a scale of one to 10. Nationally, 71 percent said they would be inclined to give such marks to the facility where they received care. Only five New Mexico hospitals received four stars under the new federal ratings while 13 received three stars and one dozen received two stars.

No hospital in the state received five stars. The stars were awarded based on surveys completed by patients discharged from nearly 3,500 acute care hospitals between July 2013 and the end of June 2014.

The star ratings are intended to give consumers an easy way of comparing the quality of care at different hospitals through medicare.gov/hospitalcompare.

	Holy Cross Hospital	New Mexico	National
Patients who reported that their room and bathroom were always clean	73%	71%	74%
Patients who reported that their nurses always communicated well	76%	76%	79%
Patients who reported that their doctors always communicated well	80%	79%	82%
Patients who reported that they always received help as soon as they wanted	73%	66%	68%
Patients who reported that their pain was always well controlled	70%	69%	71%
Patients who reported that staff always explained about medicines before giving it to them	88%	62%	65%
Patients who reported that so, they were not given information about what to do during their recovery at home	19%	17%	14%
Patients who agree or strongly agree they understood their care when they left the hospital	96%	93%	95%
Patients who gave their hospital a rating of 9 or 10 on a scale from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest)	70%	65%	71%
Patients who reported that the area around their room was always quiet at night	89%	62%	62%
Patients who reported they would probably or definitely recommend the hospital	96%	93%	95%

The pulse of a hospital Surveys of hospitals across the country have been compiled by the federal government to create a new rating system. Surveyed between July 2013 and June 2014, here is how patients responded to a few of the many questions about their care. To compare hospitals, visit medicare.gov/hospitalcompare.