

Patient recommended

Survey offers guidance in choosing hospitals

Winchester Medical Center received the highest level of recommendation in the satisfaction survey. Eighty-six percent of patients taking the survey said they would "definitely" recommend the hospital.



by Zak Kozuchowski

No longer will Virginians have to rely on word of mouth in choosing a hospital.

A 2009 survey of patient satisfaction at Virginia hospitals is available through Virginia Health Information (VHI), a nonprofit organization whose website is www.vhi.org. The survey shows that patient satisfaction in Virginia is similar to U.S. national averages.

The study is based on at least 300 completed surveys from a random sample of recently discharged patients at each hospital. They were asked to give the hospital an overall rating and also rate it on cleanliness and communication with patients. In addition, patients were asked if they would recommend the hospital to others.

Winchester Medical Center was the most recommended hospital, with 86 percent of patients saying that they would "definitely" recommend it to friends and family. Sixty-six percent of Virginia hospitals were recommended highly by patients, three percentage points lower than the national average of 69 percent. Danville Regional Medical Center received the least favorable review, with only 46 percent of patients saying that they definitely would recommend it. Another 42 percent said they would

"probably" recommend the hospital.

Winchester Medical Center also tied Bon Secours St. Francis Medical Center, a 5-year-old facility in Chesterfield County, for the highest satisfaction ratings of any Virginia hospital overall. Seventy-eight percent of patients rated the two hospitals as a 9 or 10 out of 10. Of the 74 hospitals that were rated in the category, 30 hospitals were equal to or above the U.S. average of 66 percent of patients giving their hospital a 9 or 10.

Twin County Regional Hospital in Galax topped the list for clean patient rooms and bathrooms, with 84 percent of respondents saying the areas were always clean. Buchanan General Hospital, located in Grundy, scored the highest in a category that rated doctor communication with patients, 88 percent.

The survey is called the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS). The national survey of hospital patients was created to report the patient's perspective of hospital care. Results are updated quarterly. Michael Lundberg, VHI's executive director, says consumers can use VHI's hospital satisfaction ratings along with its cardiac- and obstetric-care quality report to compare and choose Virginia hospitals.

Development of the survey was

funded by the federal government's Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). Short-term, acute-care, non-specialty hospitals participate in the survey. Specialty hospitals and children's hospitals are not included. The survey rates only hospital care of adults.

Since 2004, Virginia Business has been using VHI's reports to track the state's top hospitals based on volume of patient discharges on a 31 service lines, such as invasive cardiology, orthopedic surgery and urology. Charts showing results from 2009 on eight service lines are shown on pages 44-51. The other 23 service lines can be found on www.VirginiaBusiness.com.

The hospitals are divided into five regions: central, eastern, northern, northwest and southwest. They are ranked on their percentage of total patient discharges for a service line in each region of the state. For example, under the Cardiology-Invasive chart on page 47, CJW Medical Center had 1,263 patient discharges in 2009. That represented 20.51 percent of the discharges in the central region that year.

The General Assembly established Virginia Health Information in 1993 to gather health data. **VB**