

## Special Audio Report Transcript

Headline: California Hospitals Take Issue With Leapfrog Group's Recent Report Card on Patient Safety

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I'm Kenny Goldberg with a look at California hospitals' reaction to the recent Leapfrog Group report card on patient safety. This is a special report for *California Healthline*, a daily news service of the California HealthCare Foundation.

As the senior vice president for clinical effectiveness at San Diego's Sharp HealthCare, Nancy Pratt manages patient safety at four acute care hospitals.

Pratt says Sharp has a stellar safety record and has been frequently recognized for delivering high-quality care. In fact, Sharp won the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in 2007.

So Pratt was shocked when she saw the Leapfrog Group's recent report card on patient safety.

***(Pratt): "How is it that we got an A, two B's and a C? That suggests to me that the measurement system is not very accurate."***

What really sticks in Pratt's craw is the C grade given to Sharp Grossmont Hospital in La Mesa.

She says Grossmont has one of the system's highest adoption rates for computerized provider order entry. And yet, Leapfrog's report card gave that hospital a poor CPOE score.

***(Pratt): "There's no explanation for them to have scored Grossmont lower in CPOE than any of our other hospitals. Our hospitals are at like between 90% and 95% adoption. So they should have hit that ball out of the park."***

What's more, Pratt says the data Leapfrog used in measuring that and other safety areas were more than two years old.

***(Pratt): "But our performance in those areas is substantially better today than it was years ago. That was 2008 to 2010 data. If you***

**want to tell the public what's happening, the least you could do is give them more current information."**

Sharp Grossmont wasn't the only hospital in California to get a disappointing grade for patient safety. Leapfrog gave more than four out of ten hospitals in the state a C or worse.

Could California hospitals be that bad?

Jan Emerson-Shea, vice president with the California Hospital Association, doesn't think so.

**(Emerson-Shea): "Some of the most highly regarded top-rated hospitals in the state were rated a C. And one of those is UCLA. That just doesn't make any sense to us."**

Emerson-Shea says that speaks to a fundamental problem with hospital ratings: there's no standardization.

**(Emerson-Shea): "You get hospitals that are rated very highly on other scoring systems, and then for some reason or another, this Leapfrog report grades them much lower. And so I think it's suspicious. And I think that patients should not use this report card as a way to make any type of a final decision."**

Leapfrog's president and chief executive Leah Binder rejects the criticism. She says Leapfrog's expert panel looked at all of the publicly available measures of hospital safety, and chose 26 of the most important ones.

**(Binder): "There are other reporting enterprises out there. They look at other things. But we think that safety, meaning freedom from injury and accidents, should be the first thing you look at as a consumer. It's not the last thing you look at, it's the first thing."**

Binder says Leapfrog's report provides an accurate picture of how well hospitals did on controlling central-line infections, medication errors and other key measures.

**(Binder): "I'm sure hospitals that earned a C on this, particularly, are disappointed at their score, and their first reaction is to be defensive. But when you really drill down for each of these hospitals, and you look at how they performed on very important measures, they lagged behind their colleagues."**

Ashish Jha is an associate professor of health policy at the Harvard School of Public Health. He served as an unpaid consultant on Leapfrog's advisory panel.

Jha says since the Institute of Medicine's landmark report on hospital errors came out in 1999, there has been some improvement in patient safety. For example, infection rates in general have come down.

***(Jha): "But there are vast areas of health care and hospital care where the progress has been quite inadequate. Medication safety, injuries due to medications patients received, falls in the hospital, developing blood clots in the hospital; these are things that continue to be major problems. And if you look at the most recent studies, they suggest that we have made very, very little progress over the last ten years."***

Jha says a lot of hospitals are truly committed to improving patient safety. But he believes the industry as a whole has a long way to go.

Leah Binder believes if the Leapfrog report causes hospitals to step up their efforts, so much the better. She says her goal is to see all hospitals earn an A.

Besides independent pursuits, hospitals throughout California are involved in a number of collaborative efforts to improve patient safety. These include a program called Patient Safety First. Funded by a \$6 million grant from Anthem Blue Cross, it focuses on reducing hospital-acquired infections in intensive care units.

Over the last year-and-a-half, participating hospitals have seen declines in ventilator-assisted pneumonia, blood poisoning and urinary tract infections.

Beyond that, CHA's Emerson-Shea says hospitals know that their compensation increasingly will depend on preventing medical errors.

***(Emerson-Shea): "And so hospitals are really engaged in an entirely new and focused effort to really improve the quality, and having a Leapfrog report card really does absolutely nothing to focus the attention of hospitals, because the attention is already there."***

This has been a special report for *California Healthline*, a daily news service of the California HealthCare Foundation. If you have feedback or other issues you'd like to have addressed, please email us at [CHL@CHCF.org](mailto:CHL@CHCF.org). I'm Kenny Goldberg. Thanks for listening.