



Posted On: **February 9, 2011** by **Patrick A. Malone**

"Best Hospitals" Ratings Don't Measure Up

Last spring, we **reported in this blog** about an obscure medical journal study that punctured the balloon of the U.S. News "Best Hospitals" rankings.

The **study by Dr. Ashwini Sehgal** found that the rankings were based almost purely on the subjective reputation of the hospitals among similarly situated health care institutions, a self-fulfilling prophecy. More important, the rankings have almost nothing to do with a hospital's core job of keeping patients safe, which is something for which objective measures do exist.

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Now I'm delighted to report that this study has been spotted by the New Yorker's Malcolm Gladwell. As part of a long takedown of the silliness of rating systems in general -- he skewers everything from the "Best Colleges" ratings of U.S. News to the top cars rankings of Car and Driver.

You can read the whole thing on the [New Yorker's site here](#).

As I said in my piece last spring, one radical idea would be to ask patients what they think of hospitals where they've recently stayed. There actually are some very good correlations between quality of care and patient satisfaction: Clear communications, clean rooms, and good pain control are all important elements of going home safe and sound.

Medicare's "Hospital Compare" website publishes patient satisfaction reports for each hospital in the country. Check them out [here](#).

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