



Detailed heart surgery ratings now available

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Until now, it's been easier to rate appliances and restaurants than surgeons in most parts of the country, but that should change now that surgeons who perform cardiac bypass surgery are being rated on objective quality measures in Consumer Reports magazine.

The consumer magazine recently published ratings of 221 surgical groups in 42 states online. The same ratings will be available in the October print issue. To date, only a few states, such as New York, compile data-based ratings of physicians.

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The data Consumer Reports used to rate the physicians was collected the Society of Thoracic Surgeons, which includes more than 90% of cardiothoracic surgeons in the U.S. in its membership. Physician groups, not individual surgeons, were rated either above average, average or below average based on (a) complication and survival rates; (b) the surgical technique used; and (c) the type of medication(s) the patient was sent home with after surgery.

An article in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#) called the move to make this data public “a watershed event in health care accountability.”

The 221 groups rated in Consumer Report represent less than a quarter of physician groups that perform bypass surgery in the U.S., as only surgical groups that allowed their information to be published were rated. Of these, only five were rated below average, which is fortunate, because the gap in treatment between a below-average and an above-average surgical group can be extremely wide; for instance, at an above-average hospital, patients had a 92% chance of receiving the recommended medications when leaving the hospital; at one of the below-average hospitals, patients had only a 24% chance of getting the recommended drug.

For now, the information is available only to people who subscribe to Consumer Reports online and print subscribers. However, STS says it will make the ratings freely available on its web site in a few months.

Source: [New York Times](#) Visit the web site of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) [here](#).

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