



Spine Surgery Excellence Award Two Consecutive Years

Saint Joseph Regional Health Center, the primary surgical center for TBSI, has been recognized for exceptional outcomes in its spine surgery program for the second consecutive year in a comprehensive annual study by HealthGrades, the leading independent healthcare ratings organization.

For 2010, as in 2009, SJRHC was ranked among the top 5 percent in the nation for spine surgery - specifically the distinguished ratings were earned for excellent outcomes in back and neck surgery with fusion. Additionally, SJRHC was among the top 10 percent in the nation in total joint replacement surgery, and received 5-star ratings in two additional specialty categories. The HealthGrades study annually assesses patient outcomes – mortality and complication rates – at virtually all of the nation's nearly 5,000 nonfederal hospitals.

“This great recognition of quality outcomes is a reflection of the effort St. Joseph has put into quality care and patient outcomes,” said Tony Pfitzer, President and CEO of St. Joseph Health System. “More and more we hear from patients how impressed they are that care they can get here in our community is equal to, or better than, what they can receive in metropolitan medical centers,” said Pfitzer.

According to the twelfth annual *HealthGrades Hospital Quality in America* study top-rated hospitals had a 52 percent lower mortality rate than the U.S. national average when looking at the patient outcomes of 17 procedures and diagnoses ranging from bypass surgery to treatment for heart attack. When the top-rated hospitals were compared to the poorest performers there was an even greater difference, some 72 percent lower mortality.

Spine and Joint Replacement Excellence

More than four years ago, SJRHC committed to strengthening its orthopedic and neurosurgical programs, expanding surgical technology and diagnostic services to support the program. The recognition of a Spine Surgery Excellence Award from HealthGrades is affirmation of the focus on quality of care.

“No single factor can raise a program to this level of performance,” said Jonathan Friedman, M.D. Director of the Texas Brain and Spine Institute, a collaborative effort between St. Joseph and the Texas A&M College of Medicine. “A top five percent rating is only achieved by a team effort between OR staff, nurses and surgeons – combined with an unwavering commitment for excellence on the part of St. Joseph Regional Health Center. The high level of technology and equipment in the operating rooms at St. Joseph are also requisites to receive this recognition.”

Spinal disease is an increasing, almost epidemic, problem in the United States. A combination of an aging population, heavier people, and expectations of maintained high quality of active life has created a greater focus on spinal illness. “Spine surgery has been an area of excellence at St. Joseph for a long time, a reputation that began under the leadership of Dr. Rudy Briner nearly 20 years ago,” said Dr. Friedman. “St. Joseph has now been recognized as a national leader in the treatment of spinal disease and has seen a substantial increase in patients traveling a long distance to receive treatment in Bryan.”

HealthGrades Ratings

HealthGrades’ hospital ratings and awards reflect the track record of patient outcomes at hospitals in the form of mortality and complication rates. HealthGrades rates hospitals independently based on data that hospitals submit to the federal government. No hospital can opt in or out of being rated, and no hospital pays to be rated.

For 28 procedures and treatments, HealthGrades issues star ratings that reflect the mortality and complication rates for each category of care. Hospitals receiving a 5-star rating have mortality or complication rates that are below the national average, to a statistically significant degree. A 3-star rating means the hospital performs as expected. One-star ratings indicate the hospital’s mortality or complication rates in that procedure or treatment are statistically higher than average. Because the risk profiles of patient populations at hospitals are not alike, HealthGrades risk-adjusts the data to allow for apples-to-apples comparisons.

More information on the 2010 HealthGrades study, including the complete methodology, can be found at www.healthgrades.com.