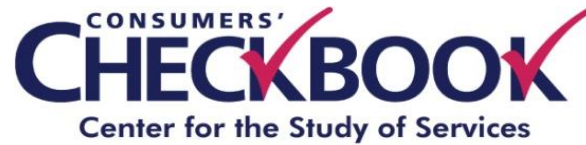


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Consumers Can Now See Which U.S. Surgeons Rate Best and Worst for Patient Outcomes Based on Analysis of Millions of Cases

Website Shows Similar Patients Have Three Times the Rate of Deaths or Other Bad Outcomes with Some Surgeons Compared to Other Surgeons

WASHINGTON—Nonprofit Consumers' Checkbook/Center for the Study of Services is releasing the names of the surgeons who—based on the organization's in-depth analyses—have the nation's *best* and *worst* outcomes in major surgeries. These analyses look at how often surgeons' patients die in hospital or within 90 days of hospital discharge, have serious complications in hospital, or need to be readmitted within 90 days of discharge for problems that can be connected to the surgery.

The ratings are available at no cost to consumers at www.SurgeonRatings.org, to help consumers find surgeons likely to have the best results.

Preventable medical errors of various kinds kill at least 200,000 Americans each year, making this the third leading cause of death in the United States, accounting for six times as many deaths as from auto accidents. One way to reduce such errors and deaths is for consumers to choose the best surgeons—and avoid the bad ones. There are dramatic differences among surgeons' results even after taking into account how sick or frail their patients are.

The ratings the Checkbook has released are based on the analysis of detailed federal government records Checkbook obtained after years of pushing and suing the government for release. The ratings are from analyses of more than five million major surgeries done by more than 50,000 doctors.

In 2015, Checkbook launched the first version of the site, which allowed consumers to see which surgeons rated best. This year, along with updated ratings that reflect two more recent years of performance data, Checkbook is again reporting the names of surgeons who rated best for outcomes, but now is also reporting which surgeons got poor ratings. There is strong evidence in medical literature that surgeons with better results use better techniques and make sure their patients get better overall care and follow-up in hospital and after release.

The site compares surgeons for 12 important, high-risk types of surgery, including heart valve and bypass surgery, various types of vascular surgery, major bowel surgery, spine surgery, pulmonary surgery, and total knee and hip replacement. Examples of the size of the differences Checkbook reported among surgeons, even after risk-adjustment, include—

- For heart valve and bypass surgery, the patients of the best-rated one-tenth of surgeons had death rates of less than 3 percent in-hospital or within 90 days of discharge, compared to death rates of more than 10 percent for patients of the worst-rated one-tenth of surgeons. The average surgeon Checkbook evaluated had about a 6 percent death rate with these surgeries.
- Similarly, for major bowel surgery, death rates ranged from less than 6 percent for the best-rated one-tenth of surgeons to more than 18 percent for the worst-rated one-tenth, with a rate of about 12 percent for the average surgeon.

- And for total hip and knee replacement, where deaths are rare, the best-rated one-tenth of surgeons had overall bad-outcome rates (deaths, complications, and readmissions) of less than 10 percent, while the worst-rated one-tenth had overall bad-outcome rates 24 percent or more.

The site also provides meaningful supporting information about the hospitals top-performing surgeons use and how well those hospitals perform, how experienced surgeons are with specific procedures, whether they are recommended by other doctors, and more.

“The more information we have, the stronger our ratings are. With this new installment of data, we are even more confident that we will be able to help many thousands of patients avoid unnecessary deaths and other bad outcomes and the information will help doctors improve,” said Robert Krughoff, Checkbook’s president. “The website has extensive advice for patients on how to make decisions and how to do their part in getting quality care. And it should not only motivate and reward doctors for improvement but also assist them in finding resources to help. We look forward to continually improving measurement in the future.”

Before SurgeonRatings.org launched, most patients had to choose surgeons with little information on likely results. A few state governments have published results for individual surgeons for heart valve and bypass surgery and Checkbook’s ratings match up well with those state reports. But there had been no such ratings for most types of major surgery and none even on heart valve and bypass surgery in most parts of the country.

About Consumers’ Checkbook: Consumers’ Checkbook/Center for the Study of Services is an independent, nonprofit organization, supported by consumers. It has for nearly 40 years been an innovator in providing consumers information to help them select the best providers of services, including providing its GuidetoHospitals.org, GuidetoTopDoctors.org, and HealthPlanRatings.org websites. Checkbook first published ratings of individual doctors based on surveys of patients back in 1980. Checkbook recently won the National Quality Forum’s inaugural Consumers and Patients for Quality Award, has been a winner of the National Press Club’s First Place Award for Excellence in Consumer Journalism, has won the Consumer Federation of America’s Annual Consumer Service Award, and has been recognized with various other honors. For the SurgeonRatings.org website, Checkbook relied on extensive analysis and advice from doctors and statisticians at MPA Healthcare Solutions (formerly Michael Pine and Associates), an organization that has for many years been widely respected for its sophisticated analysis of health care provider outcomes. Checkbook does not accept advertising, referral fees, or similar support from service providers it evaluates so there can be no question of bias.

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