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Tuesday, March 3, 2009

Story Date: Wednesday, February 25, 2009
St. Mary's consistently ranks at top

Story date: Feb. 24, 2009

By Michael Ford Reporter

As the United States health care system continues to embrace public reporting of hospital quality data, Saint Mary's Regional Medical Center continues to present itself favorably on the 29 measures currently being reported on the Hospital Compare Web site. Data from the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care for the 2008 first quarter showed Saint Mary's ranked first in Arkansas among Prospective Payment Systems (PPS) hospitals for combined performance on all of the measures, including treatment for heart attacks, heart failure, pneumonia and surgical procedures. The performance also placed Saint Mary's in the top 10 percent of all hospitals nationally.

"We consistently rank in the top 10 percent of the hospitals in the United States," said Tim Copeland, director of quality outcomes. Copeland added it was important for the community to know these measures do not always account for every set of circumstances in quality patient care.

"There are times when a physician must make a decision between complying with guidelines or doing what he or she feels is in the best interest of the patient," he said. "Saint Mary's supports our physicians in making these decisions." Though Saint Mary's may not always be ranked at the very top as it is now, Copeland indicated it would stay in good company.

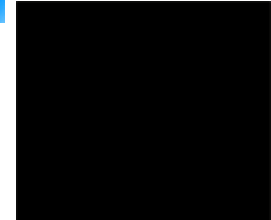
"It's kind of like a rotating carousel, depending on who happens to have a good quarter," he said. "We happen to be first right now. We wish we could maintain first every quarter."

Chief executive officer Mike McCoy said the commitment by the hospital's medical and professional staff to support, comply and document its adherence to guidelines is the reason Saint Mary's scores so highly.

"Words like performance measures, initiatives and quality outcomes can seem vague to those outside the medical community," he said. "It is easier to put meaning to the words commitment to quality and performance."

Brenda Harrison, director of public relations, said the data shows a huge commitment and compliance, both from physicians and nurses.

"It's not just a matter of doing it," she said. "It's a matter of documenting it as well. We have help from medical records and everybody to make sure we have the most accurate information out there."



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Copeland pointed to the 9-month preview period as an explanation for 2008 data just recently being released. "What you're looking at is a rolling 12-month period," he said. "For example, in another six weeks or so, you'll see the data through the end of June. It'll roll through July 2007 to June 2008. That's the actual process and why it's so far behind."

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