

3 of 4 Lee hospitals slip in patient safety grades; NCH facility moves up

Watchdog organization's semiannual rankings list Florida at No. 13

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Three Southwest Florida hospitals got top marks this fall for patient safety while others slipped a grade, according to Leapfrog Group, an independent watchdog organization.

HealthPark Medical Center maintained an "A" while the other three hospitals owned by Lee Health in Lee County all garnered "B" grades this fall. All four Lee Health hospitals had "A" grades last spring.

In Collier County, both the Baker and North Naples hospitals operated by the NCH Healthcare System got "A" grades.



Dr. Stephanie Stovall, chief quality and safety officer at Lee Health, is shown in March 2020.

AMANDA INSCORE/THE NEWS-PRESS

Last spring, the Baker hospital got a "B" while the North Naples hospital had an "A."

Leapfrog issues patient safety grades twice a year, in spring and fall, based on

publicly available hospital safety data. The grades reflect performance on more than 30 measures, including, for the first time, post-operative sepsis, blood leakage and kidney injury.

Data in the fall 2021 grades are mainly from a pre-COVID time period, though some data from 2020 and 2021 were used, according to Leapfrog. All five infection measures included in the grade contain 2020 data from July 1 to September 30, in addition to data from the three quarters of 2019.

Dr. Stephanie Stovall, chief quality and safety officer at Lee Health, did not comment directly in a statement about the grade drop at the three hospitals.

"I am proud of the incredible work our team does to keep their patients, who place their trust in us, safe," she said. "Surveys like the Leapfrog Group's hospi-

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tal safety grades challenge us to improve what we do through their rigorous standards and benchmarks."

She said Lee Health takes steps to improve best practices based on each year's results and the grades provide an opportunity to learn "and create an even better experience for our patients."

For Physicians Regional Healthcare System in Collier, both the Pine Ridge and Collier Boulevard campuses garnered "B" grades in the latest report. Physicians Regional was not graded last spring, which Leapfrog said can occur if there is not enough data.

"Physicians Regional Healthcare System is committed to providing safe, quality care for every patient. We aim for excellence and are committed to a path of continuous improvement," hospital spokeswoman Brittney Thoman said in a statement. "Quality improvement is a continuous journey and we constantly assess opportunities to enhance the care we provide."

Officials at NCH said they have come a long way to achieve the two "A" grades.

Both NCH hospitals had "C's" in spring 2020 and both had "D's" in fall 2019, which prompted NCH to file a legal



HealthPark Medical Center in Lee County. PROVIDED

challenge against Leapfrog.

NCH dropped the challenge in May 2020 to focus on improving clinical outcomes.

In the complaint filed in Collier Circuit Court, NCH said Leapfrog punishes hospitals that do not participate in a survey and that data furnished by hospitals in the surveys are rarely audited for accuracy.

NCH had not participated in the Leapfrog survey prior to the D grades.

"These 'A' grades from Leapfrog Group are proof positive that our efforts to continually provide a safe environment for our patients are not only working but are being nationally recognized as exceptional," Dr. Carlos Quintero, chief quality officer at NCH, said in a statement.

While other organizations offer hospital rankings — such as Healthgrades, Newsweek, IBM Watson Health and U.S. News and World Report — Leapfrog claims to be the only one "based exclusively on a hospital's ability to prevent medical errors and harm to patients."

The fall grades include 2,901 hospitals, the most since 2012, when Washington, D.C.-based Leapfrog began issuing grades.

Overall, Florida ranks 13 among states for 36.4% of its hospitals having "A" grades, a drop from ranking 11 in the spring with 42.5% of its hospitals with the top grade, according to Leapfrog.

Virginia, North Carolina, Idaho, Massachusetts and Colorado are the top five states with the most hospitals getting the highest mark.

North Dakota, Delaware and Washington, D.C., share the bottom place with no "A" hospitals. West Virginia ranks 48 with 4.6% of its hospitals having the top grade, and New York is 47 with 8%.