5 SWFL hospitals among top 100

Facilities in best 100 list are among the top 2% in nation, says Healthgrades ratings firm based in Colorado

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Five Southwest Florida hospitals are among the top 100 hospitals in the U.S., according to new ratings by Healthgrades.

Lee Memorial Hospital, HealthPark Medical Center, and Cape Coral Hospital are among the best 100 hospitals in the country, according to the Colorado-based ratings firm.

All three are part of the publicly-operated Lee Health system in Lee County. Lee Health's fourth acute care hospital, Gulf Coast Medical Center, is ranked among the nation's top 250 hospitals by Healthgrades.

The four acute care hospitals have a combined 1,865 beds and handle 1.5 million patient visits a year with a $2 billion annual budget.

In Collier County, the NCH Healthcare System's two campuses, North Naples and Baker hospitals, made the top 100 list.

The NCH hospitals have a combined 713 beds and saw 170,000 patient visits in 2021 and total revenue of $791 million, according to financial disclosures for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30.

Hiltz

Healthgrades is one of several hospital ratings that come out each year or more frequently; others include Leapfrog, U.S. News and World Report, and the federal government has its own CMS Star ratings.

They are designed to help consumers gain understanding of how hospitals are performing and help them decide where to get inpatient medical care when they need it.

A group of quality care experts in

Hospitals

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August 2019 published a study, "Rating the Raters," in the New England Journal of Medicine Catalyst that outlined short-comings among each of four major hospital rating systems.

The study also pointed out that the ratings can be misleading and confuse the public, according to the lead author, Dr. Karl Bilimoria, director of the Northwestern Medicine Surgical Outcomes and Quality Improvement Center.

Both Lee Health and NCH have bounced back financially in 2021 compared to the year before when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and caused significant losses. Patients avoided hospital care if they could and elective surgeries, an important revenue driver, were canceled for months.

Over the past two years, both hospital systems were inundated with COVID-19 patients who require costly and labor-intensive services, which further crippled labor supplies. Some hospital employees resigned out of fear of infection, burn out or to work for temporary staffing agencies that pay more.

Lee Health saw a $160 million profit over expenses in 2021 compared to just $2 million the year before.

NCH ended the year with a $12 million gain compared to $46 million in losses in 2020, financial documents show.

Why should you care?

Hospitals that make the best 100 list are among the top 2% in the nation, according to Healthgrades. Hospitals on the list of the best 250 in the nation are among the top 5% in performance.

The ratings firm released its annual report Feb. 8 of the best 50, 100, and 250 hospitals in the U.S. after reviewing clinical performance in 31 of the most common procedures and conditions.

The firm used Medicare data from 2018 to 2020 and roughly 4,500 hospitals nationwide were evaluated.

The conditions and procedures used in the evaluation include heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia, respiratory failure, sepsis, stroke and other common reasons for inpatient care.

Patients treated in a hospital that are among the top 100 have a 25% lower risk of dying than if they were treated in hospitals that have not maintained clinical excellence, according to Healthgrades.

In the past two years, NCH has come a long way to achieve the two "A" grades from Leapfrog. NCH HEALTHCARE

In Florida, Advent Health in Orlando also made the top 100 hospitals. Two hospitals made the top 50, which are Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville and Flagler Hospital West in St. Augustine. Nine hospitals made the top 250 list.

"Healthgrades does not take into consideration perception or popularity in analyzing and rating hospitals," according to the ratings firm. "Recipients of these quality awards have consistently delivered better than expected clinical outcomes for their patients."

The 2022 ratings is the fourth year that all Lee Health hospitals were recognized among the best, and the first time that three Lee Health hospitals were included among the 100 best hospitals in the country, according to Lee Health.

"It is a credit to Lee Health's compassionate staff and leadership team that all four adult hospitals are consistently recognized among the best in the nation," Dr. Larry Antonucci, president and chief executive officer of Lee Health, said in a news release. "In the face of a global pandemic, we have remained focused on providing the best possible health care to Southwest Florida."

Paul Hiltz, president and chief executive officer of NCH, said the hospital system "has always prided itself" on delivering quality health care to the community.

"Since my arrival as CEO two years ago our entire team has been laser-focused on reaching the benchmark of being named a top 100 healthcare system," he said in a news release.

"Our commitment to providing an exceptional patient experience each and every time has been instrumental in helping us finally reach this remarkable distinction with Healthgrades," Hiltz said.

The Healthgrades website provides consumers with resources to consider where to go for hospital care. Visit healthgrades.com for more information.