Leapfrog Survey Results: Frequently Asked Questions

What is Leapfrog?
The Leapfrog Group is a national consortium of employers committed to using market leverage to improve the safety, quality and affordability of health care. The Leapfrog Group surveys hospitals across the country on their efforts to implement standards known to improve patient safety. It publicly reports the survey results so employers can use the information to reward superior performance and consumers can use it to make more informed health care decisions.

When and why did The Leapfrog Group form?
Research on health care quality and safety has been underway for years. However, in 1999, the Institute of Medicine released a significant report, *To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System*, which revealed between 44,000 and 98,000 preventable deaths happen each year in America’s hospitals. In response to this and other alarming statistics, seven large employers came together because they were concerned about hospital safety and the potential harm to their employees. Together, these companies formed The Leapfrog Group in November 2000. Today, Leapfrog represents over 155 members with more than 34 million lives in all 50 states and its membership is still growing.

What does Leapfrog and its members want hospitals to do?
Hospitals are asked to report their progress in implementing the patient safety standards. Urban hospitals are asked to:

- **Implement computerized physician order entry systems (CPOE)**—handheld devices or computer software used by doctors and health care professionals to prescribe and administer medication. Studies show these systems can reduce errors by as much as 86 percent. They can prevent dangerous drug interactions, allergies, or overdoses, reduce confusion caused by sound-alike drugs, improve communication between doctors and pharmacists, and shorten hospital stays.

- **Staff their Intensive Care Units (ICUs) with specialists trained in critical care.** Of the four million patients admitted to ICUs nationwide annually, half a million die. Research indicates that ICUs using critical-care doctors, also known as intensivists, at least eight hours a day have lower death rates, and patients stay in the ICU fewer days.

- **Refer patients who need certain high-risk procedures to urban hospitals that meet or exceed specific volumes of procedures and that follow proven practices of care.** There is strong evidence that “practice makes perfect” or at least increases a patient’s odds of having a better outcome for certain high-risk procedures. The procedures include abdominal aortic aneurysm repair, coronary artery bypass graft, esophagectomy, high-risk pregnancy deliveries, pancreatic resection, and percutaneous coronary intervention.

Urban and rural hospitals are asked to:

- **Implement the Leapfrog Quality Index.** The Quality Index is a set of 27 basic practices known to reduce preventable medical mistakes and contribute to overall quality and safety. The practices include preventing infections by having health care workers wash their hands, preventing mislabeled x-rays, preventing wrong patient or wrong site procedures, and labeling and storing medications properly.

Doctors and urban hospitals are also asked to work with purchasers to develop additional information that consumers can use to compare and choose high-quality, safe medical care. The Leapfrog standards are not the end but rather the beginning of information needed to help consumers make informed health care decisions.
What should consumers do with the Leapfrog survey results?

- Use the Leapfrog survey results when choosing a hospital or doctor: When choosing a doctor, find out which hospital she/he would admit you to if you needed hospitalization and then check the Leapfrog ratings for that hospital before making your final decision.

- Use the Leapfrog results to ask questions: If the hospital you would go to doesn’t meet the Leapfrog standards, call the hospital and ask what it is doing to make progress with patient safety. Hospitals and doctors need to hear directly from their patients that improving safety and quality is important, and that patients will use the Leapfrog standards as part of their assessment of the safety of hospital care.

If a hospital doesn’t meet the Leapfrog standards, does that mean it is unsafe?
No. The Leapfrog standards serve as one measure of the hospital’s progress toward making care safer. Whether your hospital is urban or rural, tell your doctor and hospital that safety and quality matter to you, and find out what procedures are in place to avoid preventable medical mistakes and ensure your safety.

How often is the Leapfrog Web site updated?
The Leapfrog Web site is updated the first week of each month.

Why is this information only about hospitals? What about preventable mistakes in my doctor’s office?
The Leapfrog Group currently focuses on hospitals because a patient is usually in poor health when they are in the hospital and preventable hospital mistakes have consequences that are much more serious. The Leapfrog Group is working with other organizations, including the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, to focus on doctor office visits. We’ll share additional information with you as it becomes available.

In the meantime, please check out the hospital survey results by visiting the Leapfrog Web site at www.leapfroggroup.org or through the Leapfrog link at QualityCounts www.qualitycounts.org.