

STS POLICY STATEMENT ON PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF QUALITY RATINGS

Now that a composite quality measure has been developed for The Society of Thoracic Surgeons' National Adult Cardiac Surgery Database, participants will begin receiving their quality scores with the next semi-annual report. We anticipate that sites receiving the highest rating (3 stars) may logically be inclined to inform the medical community and the public of their success in this area.

Given the fact that this composite measure represents new ground in the assessment of clinical performance, STS has adopted this policy statement in order to provide guidance to those surgeons and hospitals participating in the Database who wish to report their composite quality ratings publicly .

The policy document titled, "Guidelines on Use of STS National Database and Database-derived Information," states that "participants are encouraged to report their own statistics and outcomes in comparison with the STS national mean or average as a benchmark assessment." The policy statement also strongly advocates reporting of sustained trends over time rather than "snapshots" that may be misleading.

In keeping with this policy, participants may report their quality ratings if they are based on data covering at least one year. The inclusive dates of data collection must be specified prominently in conjunction with the rating. While participants may compare their quality ratings with national aggregate data, they must not make direct comparisons with other hospitals or practices.

A statement along these lines is deemed appropriate: "The Society of Thoracic Surgeons has recently developed a comprehensive rating system that allows for comparisons regarding the quality of cardiac surgery among hospitals across the country. Approximately [10%] of hospitals receive the "3 star" rating, which denotes the highest category of quality. In the current analysis of national data covering the period from _____, 200_ through _____, 200_, the cardiac surgery performance of our hospital was found to lie in the highest quality tier, thereby receiving an STS 3 star rating."

Direct hospital-to-hospital comparisons are considered inappropriate. Such comparisons, or any false or misleading uses of STS quality ratings, may lead to STS disciplinary action. In that regard, it should be noted that any or all of the surgeons comprising the "Surgeon Participant" will be considered responsible for public uses of quality ratings data made by them, their group or the hospital associated with their participation in the Database.

STS leadership applauds those select sites receiving the 3 star designation. It is anticipated that the same high standards of professionalism responsible for such *clinical* excellence will also be demonstrated by the *ethical* manner in which this achievement is shared with the public.

Adopted: STS Board of Directors, May 6, 2007.