



NATIONAL COALITION
FOR CANCER SURVIVORSHIP

The power of survivorship. The promise of quality care.

April 20, 2016

The Honorable Andy Slavitt, Acting Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Acting Director Slavitt:

We are writing to commend the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for developing Hospital Star Ratings, which will be a valued and important tool for cancer survivors looking to make informed choices about their hospital care. We urge the agency to move as quickly as possible to complete and post these Star Ratings on Hospital Compare, so cancer survivors and their families can begin benefitting from them.

CMS has made a laudable commitment to making hospital quality transparent to the public. The Star Ratings are the logical and badly needed next step in that work, and will allow cancer survivors to see a summary score and overall grade that can guide them as they make essential choices about the hospitals at which they will seek care. Consumers have come to rely on ratings systems for services of all kinds, and are increasingly sophisticated about understanding and using them. The Hospital Star Ratings program will provide summary scores and star ratings based on 60 quality measures. This composite information will be weighted to emphasize results from the kinds of measures that are of greatest interest to patients and their families: outcomes measures (addressing mortality, readmissions and safety); and patient experience measures.

We understand that there is ongoing research examining the application of risk adjustment to measures used in this composite. Already that research has produced evidence that risk adjustment for socioeconomic status has little impact on hospitals' performance on these measures. We do not believe there is reason to delay implementation of the Hospital Star Ratings. Should future research produce new information, then adjustments to the Star Ratings methodology could be made.

Founded by and for cancer survivors, the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship is a public policy nonprofit organization advocating that the individual needs of patients must be front and center in the delivery of cancer care. We champion policies to improve every phase of cancer care to promote a system that is patient-focused, evidence-based, quality-driven, affordable and accessible to all. We serve on numerous committees at the National Quality Forum to provide a consumer perspective as quality measures are reviewed for endorsement and adopted into quality reporting programs.

Again, we commend CMS for developing the Hospital Compare Star Ratings and urge rapid implementation. This represents a significant step forward in helping cancer survivors to make decisions about their health care.

Sincerely,

Shelley Fuld Nasso
Chief Executive Officer