



601 E Street, NW | Washington, DC 20049  
202-434-2277 | 1-888-OUR-AARP | 1-888-687-2277 | TTY: 1-877-434-7598  
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April 22, 2016

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 Administrator Slavitt:

AARP is disappointed by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) recent announcement to delay the release of the Hospital Star Ratings. AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

We commend CMS for developing the Hospital Star Ratings, which will help consumers to make informed choices about their hospital care. AARP supports programs and approaches that will allow consumers, patients, and their family caregivers to become more engaged in managing their health and health care as health care transitions to a value-based system. We believe that making the Hospital Star Ratings available to the public is an essential aspect of supporting consumer engagement.

CMS has made a laudable commitment to making hospital quality transparent to the public—a commitment that has continued under numerous agency leaders. The Star Ratings are the logical and badly needed next step in that work. It will allow consumers to see a hospital's summary score and overall grade—information that can guide them as they make critical decisions about the hospitals at which they will seek care.

AARP urges the agency to continue its commitment to transparency and public reporting. CMS should ensure no more delays in posting the Star Ratings on Hospital Compare. There is no time to waste. Every day, consumers make choices about which hospitals to use, for themselves and for family members, and would benefit from the Star Ratings.

We are aware that there is ongoing research examining the application of socio-economic status (SES) risk adjustment to measures used in this composite score. That research has produced ample evidence that SES risk adjustment has little impact on hospitals' performance on these measures. We therefore do not believe this is a reason to delay implementation of the Hospital Star Ratings. Star Ratings methodology can be adjusted should future research produce new information. In addition, AARP believes that to truly provide patient- and family-centered care, it is critically important to include the patient experience of care performance scores in the Star Ratings.

Consumers, patients, and their family caregivers need useful, easily understandable tools to inform their choice of hospitals. Now is the time to implement the Hospital Star Ratings. We commend CMS for developing the ratings, and urge no more delays towards its immediate implementation.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions, or have your staff contact Andrew Scholnick, of our Government Affairs team, at 202-434-3793 or [ascholnick@aarp.org](mailto:ascholnick@aarp.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Certner", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Certner  
Legislative Counsel and Legislative Policy Director

Cc:

Patrick Conway, M.D., Deputy Administrator for Innovation and Quality and CMS Chief Medical Officer

Kate Goodrich, M.D., Director, Center for Clinical Standards and Quality