

January 25, 2017

Ben Harder, Chief – Health Analysis Services
US News & World Report
bharder@usnews.com

Geoff Dougherty, Senior Health Services Researcher
US News & World Report
gdougherty@usnews.com

Dear Mr. Harder and Mr. Dougherty,

The AAHKS Board of Directors has reviewed the information you provided regarding US News & World Report's plans to create and publish a rating system for individual surgeons. We sincerely appreciate you asking for input from us concerning your project, although the short time remaining before planned publication is a serious concern.

As discussed on our recent call, there currently exists no recognized methodology for making "quality" distinctions among individual hip and knee surgeons. The lack of adequate risk adjustment in a rating system creates a disincentive to care for the more ill and complex patients while unfairly penalizing surgeons prepared to treat them. In addition to risk adjustment, efforts to develop such a methodology are further complicated by the fundamental deficiencies in the accuracy and relevance of the data sets available for your use.

Our organization has serious concerns that your management has allocated insufficient time to accomplish this ambitious project. We cannot support the publication of anything that purports to give our patients knowledge on which to base their health care decisions unless it uses demonstrably valid methods and accurate underlying data accompanied by appropriate risk adjustment for both medical and orthopaedic complexity.

Therefore, in response to your email of January 10:

1. It appears there is insufficient time for an AAHKS clinical advisor to provide meaningful input, therefore we must decline the request to provide one.
2. Current quality indicators were not designed to accurately discriminate individual surgeon quality. As discussed, we would expect a Concordance statistic (C-statistic) for a valid ranking scale to be at least above 0.7, and preferably above 0.8. Unfortunately, as you are well aware, the Yale Group's series of measures all had statistics considerably below 0.7.
3. The citations that you had requested to corroborate our concerns are attached to this letter.

While we applaud initiatives to provide our patients with information they can use to make decisions about their health, including their choice of surgeon, the validity and accuracy of this information is essential.

With all best wishes,



William Jiranek MD, FACS
President, American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons

Encls.

CC: AAHKS Board of Directors

American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons

American Medical Association

The Hip Society

The Knee Society