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Leadership lacking: Leapfrog

By Jean DerGurahian

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More board leadership is required if hospitals are going to increase their level of performance on quality measures enough to qualify as a top facility as named by the Leapfrog Group, officials for the employer-backed quality group said.

Changes to the group's annual survey—now in its third year—have resulted in fewer hospitals achieving the distinction as a top quality and patient-safety performer. The patient-safety organization is demanding more stringent performance, said Cathie Furman, senior vice president of quality and compliance for 289-bed Virginia Mason Medical Center. The Seattle-based hospital has appeared on Leapfrog's top hospitals list all three years.

This year, 33 hospitals were named top performers, based on survey results from 1,220 participants. In 2007, 41 hospitals made the list, and in 2006, 59 hospitals were named.

The survey asks hospitals about performance in four "leaps" championed by the organization: computerized physician order-entry systems, high-risk procedures; intensive-care staffing levels; and safety practices and policies advocated by the National Quality Forum.

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