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Lay Summary

DO PATIENTS CHOOSE HOSPITALS THAT IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH?

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Patients in the English NHS can choose which hospital to attend for planned surgery. Among other things, their choice depends on the quality of care that each hospital provides. But the existing information on hospital quality is often limited and focuses only on the negative experience of patients, for example how many patients died after surgery or were readmitted for unplanned care.

Patients increasingly have access to better information on hospital quality. The NHS has recently begun to publish information on improvements in health as reported by patients themselves. In this paper we test whether hip replacement patients in England are more likely to attend a hospital that achieves larger improvements in their patients' health. To do so, we study the choices made by NHS-funded patients treated during the period 2010 to 2012.

We find that health improvements are more important for the choice of hospital than readmission or mortality rates. However, patients' reaction to quality information is generally limited: even for large changes in quality patients would only be willing to travel about one kilometre more. But because the market for hip replacement surgery is large, individual hospitals can attract a substantial number of extra patients if they can improve their quality.

Full report available at

http://www.york.ac.uk/media/che/documents/papers/researchpapers/CHERP111_hospital_quality_patient_choice_outcomes.pdf

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