

Feds to allow use of Medicare data to rate doctors

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(AP) -- Trying to find a top specialist to assess potentially troubling findings on a routine mammogram? That nerve-wracking process may soon get easier.

Federal officials announced Monday that Medicare will finally allow the use of its extensive claims database to rate doctors, hospitals and other medical service providers.

The [report cards](#) could be produced by employers, [consumer groups](#) or others, and would have to follow valid statistical methods. Individual medical providers would have 60 days to privately challenge a report before its release.

But Medicare acting administrator Marilyn Tavenner calls it "a giant step forward" to making [medical decisions](#) less daunting for patients while holding providers accountable for quality.

Consumer groups that have long pushed for the release of the data said they are still poring over the fine print.

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