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Tenn. hospitals see savings, better outcomes after taking part in quality collaborative, study says

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Ten Tennessee hospitals saw improved surgical outcomes and millions in cost savings after participating in a regional quality collaborative coordinated by the American College of Surgeons' National Surgical Quality Improvement Program.

The results of the project, known as the Tennessee Surgical Quality Collaborative, were published online by the Journal of the American College of Surgeons. After collecting data, identifying trends related to surgical harm and implementing best practices across the 10 hospitals, rates of complications such as surgical-site infections and acute renal failure dropped significantly, according to the study.

And those improvements saved the collaborative nearly \$2.2 million per 10,000 general and vascular surgery cases in 2010, when compared with data from 2009. The American College of Surgeons speculated that the cost savings were actually greater because ACS NSQIP collects data on only a sample of cases.

"We demonstrated that hospitals in a collaborative can greatly improve their quality by sharing data, comparing results, and evaluating best practices and process improvement approaches with their peers," Dr. Joseph Cofer, professor of surgery and surgery residency program director at the University of Tennessee College of Medicine-Chattanooga, and an author of the study, said in a news release.

Tennessee's improvement collaborative includes 501-bed Johnson City Medical Center; 538-bed Erlanger Medical Center, Chattanooga; and 501-bed Parkwest Medical Center, Knoxville.

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