

PPO

Best Practices

Assuring Successful
Bariatric Surgery
Outcomes



PPO BEST PRACTICES FOR ASSURING SUCCESSFUL BARIATRIC SURGERY OUTCOMES

ISSUE BRIEF

CASE STUDY IN QUALITY CONTRACTING

Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery

The Blue Distinction program was created to encourage providers to improve quality of health care in order to provide better outcomes for patients, and to help patients identify high quality medical facilities that meet their treatment needs. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association created the Blue Distinction program to recognize high quality facilities in a number of important treatment categories, including bariatric surgery, heart disease, cancer treatment, and transplants. Local licensed Blue Cross Blue Shield plans often give a preference to Blue Distinction centers, but it is up to the local plans to develop policies regarding coverage for bariatric surgery at Blue Distinction or other non certified bariatric programs.

Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery are medical centers that have demonstrated excellence in delivering quality bariatric surgery care. Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery provide a full range of bariatric surgery care services, including inpatient care, post-operative care, outpatient follow-up care and patient education. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association developed the designation based on criteria developed in collaboration with leading experts in the field—including the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS), the Surgical Review Corporation (SRC) and the American College of Surgeons (ACS). Since its inception in 2006, the program has awarded 272 centers Blue Distinction designation.

In order to meet the program's goals of improving quality and meeting patient needs, medical centers must meet demanding process and outcome goals. Selection criteria include:

- an established bariatric surgery program, actively performing these procedures for the most recent 12-month period and performing a required minimum volume of 125 such surgeries annually
- appropriate experience of its bariatric surgery team
- an acute care inpatient facility, including intensive care and emergency services
- full accreditation by The Joint Commission, Healthcare Facilities Accreditation Program (HFAP) or national equivalent
- a comprehensive quality management program

The Blue Distinction program also relies on quality metrics: to be considered for Blue Distinction, medical centers must demonstrate acceptable re-admission, 30-day re-operation and mortality rates. In addition, centers must demonstrate a greater than 50% sustained excess weight loss (EWL) at two years. Blue Distinction centers average 5% complication rates, compared to an 8% complication rate demonstrated by non-Blue Distinction centers.

The Blue Distinction program does not specifically examine bariatric programs for cost implications to the plan or patient. According to the program description, "The goal of this program is to raise the overall quality of healthcare being delivered across this country so the national selection criteria for Blue Distinction focus on quality indicators, not costs." The total cost of a bariatric surgery depends on the prices charged by the

hospital and surgeon, and the rate of complications that might necessitate more procedures. For bariatric surgery the price is negotiated with a Center of Excellence by the local Blue plan reimbursing for the surgery. It is the expectation of the Blue Distinction program that by promoting higher quality care and carefully monitoring outcomes, the cost related to complications will be minimized. Lower rates of complications also translate into better quality of life and faster return to work for patients.

Quality Category	Blue Distinction Requirement Address:
Patient Results (or Patient Outcomes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complication rates • Readmission rates • Mortality rate
Treatment Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physician credentials • Dedicated team focused on providing the particular area of specialty care • Length of time a facility has performed a procedure
Procedure Volume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of times a particular procedure has been completed
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of services provided (ER, diagnostic testing abilities) • Supporting departments (radiology, nutrition, social services, rehabilitation, etc.) • Use of clinical registry data systems
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of evidence-based care (e.g., use of beta blockers or aspirin for cardiac patients, which typically results in better outcomes) • Systematic follow-up of patient results after procedures • Quality improvement processes

WEBSITE: <http://www.bcbs.com/innovations/bluedistinction/blue-distinction-bariatric/>

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