

NHS death league table axed

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Plans for a league table of avoidable deaths in hospitals have been dropped after ministers accepted that it would be meaningless and could put safety improvement at risk.

All NHS hospitals will publish estimates by the end of the month on how many patients have died because of problems with their care, Jeremy Hunt, the health secretary, has promised.

However, after a series of delays Mr Hunt has accepted that the figures will not be collated centrally because they are not comparable, agreeing that their most important use will be to help local hospitals learn from their mistakes. Mr

Hunt said: "Too often I have heard from families saying that after mistakes happen they feel like a wall has gone up in the NHS, but publishing this data will help give grieving families the openness and answers they deserve. It marks a milestone in ensuring the NHS learns from every tragic case."

Studies have estimated that up to 9,000 patients a year die because of care errors and Mr Hunt originally planned to rank hospitals into bands by avoidable death figures. Hospitals were meant to publish figures in March last year, but Mr Hunt accepted expert advice that it could be counterproductive if it encouraged bosses to be less rigorous in looking for mistakes.

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