

2009 - ABDOMINAL AORTIC ANEURYSM (AAA) REPAIR

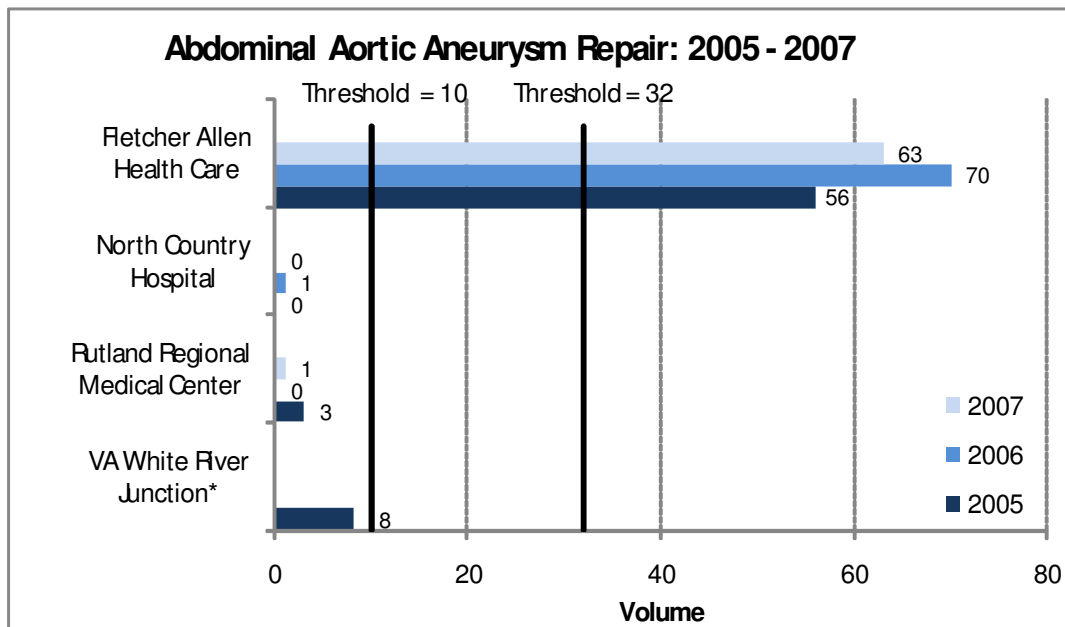
An aneurysm is a defect or swelling in the wall of a weak or damaged artery. The aorta is the main artery carrying blood from the heart to the rest of the body. Aneurysms that occur in the part of the aorta within the abdomen are called abdominal aortic aneurysms.

Surgery called abdominal aortic aneurysm repair can repair the artery before it ruptures. In some cases, once the aneurysm ruptures, the patient may be saved by emergency surgery.

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Repair: Volume

Volume is measured as the number of patients who underwent AAA Repair. Scientific research indicates that higher volumes (that is, doing more of the procedures) are connected with better outcomes, and medical experts have recommended thresholds establishing the minimum number of procedures a facility should perform in order to assure safety and better outcomes. For AAA Repair, the lowest minimum threshold recommended in scientific literature is 10 procedures per year, and the highest minimum threshold recommended by any scientific study is 32 procedures per year (see Technical Guide for more information).

- Hospitals not shown had no cases in the reporting years.
- Hospital comments about this measure are listed below the mortality table.
- These volume data may include more patients than the mortality data on the following page. The mortality data exclude patients who were discharged (transferred) to another hospital or for whom discharge information is unknown.



*The VA White River Junction did not report a full year of data in 2006 or 2007, and as a result was excluded from the 2006 and 2007 analysis.

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Repair: Mortality Rate

Mortality refers to the number of patients who underwent the procedure at a hospital and died at the same hospital (see Technical Guide for more information).

- Lower rates may represent better quality.
- These measures lack reliability and are influenced by random variation when the number of procedures is small. Small numbers of reported cases are often not sufficient for establishing a pattern of care. For this reason, mortality rates are not calculated for hospitals with fewer than 30 cases in a reporting year. Even when there are more than 30 cases, caution should be used when interpreting rates.
- Hospitals not shown had no cases in any of the reporting years.
- Hospital comments about this measure are listed below the table.
- These mortality data may include fewer patients than the volume data on the previous page. The mortality data exclude patients who were discharged (transferred) to another hospital or for whom discharge information is unknown.

Hospitals performing procedures in 2005, 2006, and/or 2007	Number of Procedures			Number of Deaths			Mortality Rate					
							Observed Rate			Risk-Adjusted Rate		
	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007
Fletcher Allen Health Care	56	70	63	2	3	3	4%	4%	5%	3%	4%	4%
North Country Hospital	0	1	0		0			*			*	
Rutland Regional Medical Center	3	0	1	1		0	*		*	*		*
VA White River Junction	8	ND	ND	1	ND	ND	*			*		
Vermont Total	67	71	64	4	3	3	6%	4%	5%	5%	4%	4%
National Total										7%	NA	NA

* Rates for hospitals with fewer than 30 procedures are not presented because of concerns that small numbers result in statistically unreliable rates.

ND = "No Data" - The VA Hospital did not submit data for a full year in 2006 or 2007.

NA = "Not Available" - National mortality rates are not yet available for 2006 and 2007 (<http://hcup.ahrq.gov>).

Definitions

Number of Procedures	- The number of patients who underwent this procedure at the hospital (does not include patients who were transferred to another hospital or who have unknown discharge information).
Number of Deaths	- The number of patients who underwent this procedure at a hospital and died at the same hospital.
Mortality Rate	- The percentage of patients who underwent this procedure who died at the hospital. Two ways of measuring this rate are Observed Rate and Risk-Adjusted Rate.
Observed Rate	- The Number of Deaths divided by the Number of Procedures. This does not take into account age, gender, or the complexity of particular cases.
Risk-Adjusted Rate	- Mortality rate adjusted for age, gender, and complexity. This rate allows for better comparisons between hospitals. It is important to note, however, that it is difficult to draw firm conclusions from rates based on a small number of procedures.

The following hospitals provided additional comments about abdominal aortic aneurysm repair:

Fletcher Allen Health Care: Fletcher Allen Health Care, as Vermont's academic medical center, performs a wide range of vascular surgical procedures, including the Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) procedure. All Fletcher Allen vascular surgeons are fully certified by the American Board of Surgery with specific qualifications in Vascular Surgery.

Fletcher Allen's extensive vascular surgery activity strengthens surgeon expertise in this critical subspecialty and contributes to the low mortality rate seen in the data above. The vascular care team at Fletcher Allen reviews surgical outcomes as part of its academic training program and actively engages in efforts to continuously improve the long-term outcomes for this population.

Department of Veteran's Affairs Medical Center, White River Junction: All AAA procedures at the White River Junction VA Medical Center are done with a minimally invasive technique using a catheter and stent. Open repair is not done at this medical center. Our vascular surgeons also perform these procedures at our affiliate, so their surgical volumes are higher than that reflected in the White River Junction VA data.