

## **WHAT MAY BE GAINED FROM THE PUBLIC RELEASE OF PERFORMANCE DATA?**

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The public disclosure of information about the comparative performance of health care providers has been proposed as one mechanism of improving the quality of care. Performance data have been made public in the United States for over a decade, and the publication of comparative information about quality of care is becoming an important health policy initiative in several other countries around the world. The balance between the advantages and risks of pursuing such a policy are largely unknown. Advocates of public disclosure emphasise the role that comparative data can play in ensuring accountability, involving service users and encouraging improvements in the processes and outcomes of care. Opponents cite the growing body of evidence that the public make little use of comparative data, the risk that public disclosure may result in a loss of public confidence in the health system and demoralisation of health service staff and the potential for gaming and misrepresentation of the data.

In this presentation, Professor Marshall will describe the international experience of releasing information into the public domain and the resulting implications for the policy and practice of public reporting.