Background
Improving the transparency of information about the quality of health care providers is one way to improve health care quality. However, users find it difficult to understand the formats in which information is presented.

Objective
We analyzed the presentation of risk-adjusted mortality rate (RAMR) for coronary angiography in 10 German public report cards to analyze the impact of information presentation features on their comprehensibility. We wanted to determine which information presentation features were utilized, were preferred by users, led to better comprehension, and had similar effects to those reported in evidence-based recommendations described in the literature.

Methods
(1) identification of best-practice evidence about the presentation of information on hospital report cards; (2) selection of a single risk-adjusted quality indicator; (3) selection of a sample of designs adopted by German public report cards; (4) identification of the information presentation elements used and (5) an online panel completed an online questionnaire.

Results
Recommendations were made about: see table. When investigating the RAMR in a sample of 10 hospitals' report cards, 7 of these information presentation features were identified. Of these, 5 improved comprehensibility in a manner reported previously in literature.

Conclusion
This is the first study to systematically analyze the most commonly used public reporting card designs used in Germany. Best-practice evidence identified in international literature was in agreement with 5 findings about German report card designs: (1) avoid tables without symbols, (2) include bar charts with symbols, (3) state explicitly whether high or low values indicate good performance or provide a “good quality” range, (4) avoid incomplete data (N/A given as a value), and (5) rank hospitals by performance. However, ranking hospitals by performance may present substantial difficulties.

Choice of the hospital with the lowest risk-adjusted mortality rate (RAMR).