

October 26, 2007

## Recent Events Put Focus on Infection Prevention in Hospitals and the Community

### AT A GLANCE

#### **The Issue:**

New information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the prevalence of methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), an antibiotic-resistant staph infection, provides an opportunity for hospitals to reassess their infection control practices, and to reach out to others in their communities to assist in addressing the threat of infections. The CDC estimates that more than 94,000 cases of MRSA infection occurred in 2005 and were associated with over 18,000 deaths.

At the same time, recent national media reports of staph infections in schools, gyms and day care centers have heightened community awareness of MRSA and the importance of community-wide infection prevention. The CDC estimates that 14 percent of MRSA infections originate in the community, outside of health care settings. The CDC report was published in the October 17 *Journal of the American Medical Association* and establishes the first national baseline for MRSA infection rates.

#### **Our Take:**

The CDC's report adds critical information about the changing nature of MRSA and provides valuable insights for those on the frontlines of care.

#### **What You Can Do:**

- ✓ Share this advisory with your chief medical and nursing officers, infection control specialists, and communications team.
- ✓ Assign a senior leader to monitor the action items on this advisory's checklist.
- ✓ Take advantage of the increased public awareness of MRSA to reinforce the message that fighting drug-resistant infections requires multiple approaches and must involve everyone in the community.
- ✓ For more information on infection control practices and ways for you to partner with your community, visit the AHA Quality Center's Web site, <http://www.ahaqualitycenter.org>.
- ✓ Participate in upcoming AHA member calls with CDC experts to keep abreast of current data on infections and best practices in infection control; the calls will be November 9 and December 10 at 2:00 p.m. EST.

#### **Further Questions:**

Please contact Nancy Foster, vice president of quality and patient safety policy, at (202) 626-2337 or [nfoster@aha.org](mailto:nfoster@aha.org) or Beth Feldpush, senior associate director of quality improvement and patient safety, at (202) 626-2963 or [bfeldpush@aha.org](mailto:bfeldpush@aha.org).

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## Recent Events Put Focus on Infection Prevention Efforts in Hospitals and the Community

### BACKGROUND

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently issued a report that estimates 94,360 cases (about 32 cases per 100,000 residents) of an antibiotic-resistant infection, methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), occurred in the U.S. in 2005. The study, reported in the October 17 *Journal of the American Medical Association*, establishes the first national baseline for MRSA infection rates. The CDC concludes that MRSA is more prevalent than previously believed, affects certain populations disproportionately, and is being found more often outside of health care settings.

Although the CDC found that most infections are healthcare-associated, only 27 percent of the infections were classified as originating during a hospitalization. Another 58 percent were classified as likely resulting from the provision of health care in any number of settings and probably present at the time of the admission. An additional 14 percent of the MRSA infections were determined to be community acquired.

The CDC's report paints a fuller picture of MRSA's reach into communities and gives hospitals new insights that will help them work with others to eliminate infections. While many infections are healthcare-associated, the CDC's report showed that there are a substantial number that are not. This information helps hospitals understand not only the work that has to be done inside their four walls, but also the importance of reaching out to the community and working with others to prevent infection.

Most recently, public awareness of MRSA has been heightened by national media stories of MRSA outbreaks in schools, health clubs and day care centers. This increased public awareness provides an important opportunity for you to help your community. Hospitals have a long track record of working to prevent infections and have developed expertise in this area. Every hospital has infection control professionals with knowledge on how to prevent the spread of

infection. We encourage you to offer your expertise and engage with others in your community, particularly other health care providers and schools, health clubs and other organizations where infections frequently occur, to fight infections together. To keep drug-resistant infections in check, infection control must be everyone's job.

### **ACTION CHECKLIST**

- ✓ Review your infection control plan in light of the CDC's findings and update it if necessary. You may find that it is appropriate in your community to increase surveillance activities. Also, remember that successful planning and prevention involves a wide range of professionals and employees within the hospital, including physicians, nurses and other caregivers; the quality improvement team; the housekeeping department and the communications team, among others. Evaluate whether refresher briefings or enhanced training may be needed.
- ✓ Consider increasing your efforts to communicate about these issues with staff, patients and your community. Make sure your entire staff understands how your organization is preventing infections for patients, visitors and employees. Consider providing information to patients about infection prevention at your hospital and their role in fighting infections. Include information on recent MRSA concerns in your community newsletter and on your Web site. Take the opportunity to educate your local media about MRSA and infection prevention.
- ✓ Participate in specially arranged AHA member calls with CDC experts to keep abreast of current information on infections and best practices in infection control. This is an opportunity to connect you with some of the nation's leading infection prevention experts. The first calls will be held November 9 and December 10, both at 2:00 p.m. EST. Additional calls will be scheduled later. Watch for more information on this new member call series.
- ✓ Visit the AHA Quality Center at <http://www.ahaqualitycenter.org> for information on infection control practices, examples of successful practices and ways for you to partner with your community to fight infections.
- ✓ Reach out to your community and offer your hospital's infection control and prevention expertise to other health care providers, schools, health clubs and others. Take the lead in working together to fight infections in your community. Reinforce the message that fighting drug-resistant infections requires multiple approaches, and must include everyone in the community.