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Oregon hospitals reduce rate of central line infections by 40 percent

Preventing infections improves patient care and lowers costs

Oregon hospitals reduced central line infections by 40 percent from 2009 to 2010, according to the Oregon Health Authority's most recent report on health care acquired infections.

The 2010 Oregon central line infection rate is 60 percent lower than the most recent national rate. State officials say the improved rate is a positive sign that Oregon hospitals are working effectively to reduce infection rates, leading to better health for the patients they treat and ultimately resulting in lower health care costs.

The report, which highlights 2009 and 2010 trends, also shows that 94 percent of the time Oregon hospitals adhere to three surgical care improvement project measures, such as giving antibiotics at the right time.

No significant change was found in comparing 2009 and 2010 surgical site infection rates for coronary artery bypass grafts or knee replacement surgeries.

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Oregon is one of 22 states where statewide public reporting for health care acquired infections is mandatory and one of 10 states to publicly report this data. Since 2009, all Oregon hospitals have been required to report three of the most common infections: central line associated bloodstream infections (CLABSI), those that occur after knee prosthesis surgery, and those associated with coronary bypass graft surgery.

In January 2011, hospitals also began reporting surgical site infections for abdominal hysterectomies, colon surgeries, hip replacements and laminectomies. In addition, two new process-of-care measurements are now being reported: cardiac surgery with controlled postoperative glucose and surgery patients with peri-operative temperature measurement.

“The 40 percent reduction of central line infections in Oregon hospitals shows that prevention is making a difference,” said Tina Edlund, chief of policy for the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). “The report provides us with an opportunity to know what’s working and where improvements are still needed to improve patient health and safety, while also lowering costs.”

About one of every 20 hospitalized patients in the United States experiences a health care-acquired infection. In Oregon, the infection increases the cost of the patient’s hospital stay by an average of \$32,000. These infections are among the top 10 leading causes of death in the United States and cost an estimated \$33 billion per year nationally.

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The improved rates show that health care providers are increasingly aware of and accountable for health care-acquired infections. A group of Oregon hospitals is participating in projects that address training and practices for hand hygiene compliance, peer accountability and improved infection prevention practices. The Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (OAHHS) coordinates hospital projects on improving hand hygiene compliance and CLABSI reduction. More information can be found on the OAHHS [website](#).

“Oregon hospitals work in a transparent way to eliminate all health care-acquired infections in our state. Patient safety is our primary responsibility,” said Dr. Steve Gordon, member of the OAHHS Quality Committee and system senior director HITECH for PeaceHealth Oregon. “This second report illustrates that, although Oregon has made incredible headway in reducing infections, and is ahead of national averages in terms of reducing such infections, there is always room for improvement. Addressing HAIs is a priority of every hospital in this state.”

Patients can reduce the risk of infection by taking all the pre-hospitalization infection prevention steps their doctor recommends, such as pre-surgical chlorhexidine baths, not shaving before surgery and stopping smoking. They are also encouraged to take all medications, including antibiotics, exactly as directed by their doctor, and ask visitors to stay home if they are sick.

The Oregon Health Care Acquired Infections report stems from legislation passed in 2007 to create a mandatory reporting program to raise awareness, promote transparency for health care consumers and to motivate health care providers to make prevention a priority.

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The report, completed by the OHA's Office of Health Policy and Research, is available on the OHPPR [website](#).

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About the Oregon Health Authority

OHA is the organization at the forefront of lowering and containing costs, improving quality, and increasing access to health care in order to improve the lifelong health of Oregonians. OHA is overseen by the nine-member citizen Oregon Health Policy Board working toward comprehensive health and health care reform in our state.

About the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems

OAHHS is a statewide nonprofit trade association that works to enhance and promote community health and to continue improving Oregon's innovative health care industry. In addition to 58 acute care hospitals, OAHHS membership includes 10 health systems and related health plans.