

Vermont Awarded Grant to Prevent Hospital-Acquired Infections

In August 2009, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) awarded the Vermont Department of Health \$830,600 to strengthen healthcare-associated infection (HAI) prevention activities. These efforts will build upon an existing infrastructure already in place for tracking HAIs. In 2003, state legislation was enacted (18 V.S.A. § 9405b) requiring Vermont's hospitals and the Vermont Department of Banking, Insurance, Securities, and Health Care Administration (BISHCA) to publicly report quality and patient safety data on a hospital-specific basis. A 2006 amendment to that legislation specifically required public reporting of HAI rates. Vermont was the first state in the nation to publicly report hospital-specific HAI rates using the CDC's National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN), an electronic reporting system.

While public reporting has a role in reducing infection rates, a structured, well-coordinated and efficient prevention strategy is needed to reduce the rate of HAIs. The Vermont Department of Health worked closely with BISHCA, the Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care (VPQHC), the Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, hospital infection preventionists, consumer representatives, and the Vermont Health Care Association (representing long-term care facilities) to develop the Vermont HAI Prevention Plan, which is currently under review by the Department of Health and Human Services. The plan outlines several surveillance and prevention activities for reducing HAIs.

Currently, information about surgical-site infections (SSIs) and central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSIs) is being reported in NHSN. VPQHC obtains the data from NHSN, verifies it with the reporting source, analyzes it, and provides it to BISHCA for public reporting. The public infection rate data can be found at: www.vthospitalreportcards.info. In addition to SSIs and CLABSIs, the State HAI Prevention Plan expands surveillance (but not necessarily public reporting) to include additional HAIs.

The CDC funding will provide resources and technical assistance to hospitals to encourage them to begin reporting multidrug-resistant organism data to NHSN, as well as to develop electronic systems to upload denominator data to NHSN to improve the efficiency of reporting.

In addition, small stipends will be awarded to healthcare facilities that participate in a statewide Healthcare Associated Infection Collaborative. The Collaborative will provide an opportunity for bedside nurses from hospitals and long-term care facilities to work together to develop and implement training programs consistent with current process improvement methodology and the "Compendium of Strategies to Prevent Healthcare-Associated Infections in Acute Care Hospitals." These trained staff members, called Infection Prevention Advocates, will work to ensure that the Compendium guidelines are implemented during direct patient care, using tools and strategies learned during Collaborative Learning Sessions and Webinars.

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