

Statement by the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America in response to Consumer Reports Hospital Infection Rates Report and Database

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The report released by Consumer Reports on infection rates in healthcare facilities highlights the importance of transparent public reporting to engaging patients in the healthcare process and aiding their healthcare decisions. The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) supports public reporting as part of a comprehensive strategy to eliminate healthcare-associated infections (HAIs). Such data should stimulate immediate and sustained action by healthcare facilities to improve adherence to evidence-based prevention practices – the basis for checklists, innovative prevention programs, and other strategies – that can yield measurable improvements and indeed, elimination of HAIs.

As leaders in the field of infection prevention and control, SHEA members are deeply committed to the need for establishing a national standard of reporting for HAIs. In 2006, SHEA, the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), and the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) jointly published model legislation and a toolkit outlining recommendations for design of public reporting programs at the state level (<http://www.shea-online.org/policy>). These recommendations focused on creating standardized definitions of healthcare associated infections, ensuring validated data and supporting the use of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Health Safety Network as a backbone for surveillance and public reporting.

We are pleased that nearly half of the states have adopted laws similar to this model. However, SHEA believes it is time for a national standard that can ensure validated data and comparisons that accurately portray infection rates across geographic and health status-based risk categories. Such attention must be paid to ensure that patients and healthcare facilities have comparable information and that the focus remains on continuous improvement at each facility. A national standard will give all of us involved in the delivery of patient care – including the patient themselves – data for action that drives our progress toward elimination of HAIs.

Ultimately, a crucial byproduct of public reporting is patient and family engagement. SHEA is dedicated to translating evidence into useful information and tools that help patients and their families make decisions before, during, and after care in a healthcare facility. Since 2008, SHEA has made available **free** information resources for patients and families derived from evidence-based guidelines for preventing HAIs. These patient guides provide information on six types of HAIs and identify important practices that they should expect from their providers, important questions that patients and families should ask during their care, and steps that patients and their families can take to prevent infections during care in the healthcare facility and at home. These guides are endorsed by the major organizations dedicated to patient safety, and to the elimination of HAIs including SHEA, IDSA, APIC, the CDC, the American Hospital Association, and the Joint Commission. They are widely used by nurses, patient educators and others in healthcare facilities across the nation to empower patients and families. These resources can be found at: <http://www.preventinghais.com> OR <http://www.shea-online.org/about/patientguides.cfm>

The focus on public transparency can lead to a culture of accountability, continuous healthcare quality improvement, and patient engagement. Combined with the dedicated efforts of thousands of healthcare workers to implement evidence-based practice, and with the power of science to guide all of those efforts true progress toward elimination of HAIs can be realized.

APIC Statement in Response to *Consumer Reports* “Deadly infections: Hospitals can lower the risk, but many fail to act”

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Washington, DC, February 3, 2010 -- The following statement is attributable to Kathy Warye, CEO of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC):

“The March 2010 issue of *Consumer Reports* (available online February 1), “Deadly infections: Hospitals can lower the risk, but many fail to act,” addresses one of the most pressing healthcare issues facing our nation today: healthcare-associated infections (HAIs). As a patient safety advocate, the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) appreciates the fact that *Consumer Reports* has chosen to focus on the checklist that many hospitals are using to prevent deadly bloodstream infections and has included summaries of central-line associated bloodstream infection (CLABSI) rates in healthcare facilities.

Since 1972, APIC has provided thought leadership on infection prevention to drive attention to the critical need to protect patients from HAIs. APIC has established itself as an authority in the application of evidence-based infection control measures and hospital epidemiology.

“In 2004, APIC announced its support of public reporting of healthcare-associated infections as a path to improved quality and patient safety. Further, APIC supported http://www.apic.org/Content/NavigationMenu/GovernmentAdvocacy/PublicPolicyLibrary/Health_Care_Reform_HAIs_Joint_Letter_July_16_Final.pdf the HAI reporting language in the House of Representatives Healthcare Reform legislation, which would require nationwide HAI reporting through the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Healthcare Surveillance Network. We believe this network is the best method for ensuring the establishment of a scientifically meaningful reporting and monitoring system for HAIs.

“While not all HAIs are preventable, APIC believes that every healthcare institution should be working toward a goal of zero healthcare-associated infections <http://www.apic.org/AM/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm?ContentFileID=11707> . Many of our member facilities have seen that central-line associated bloodstream infections can be reduced to zero, and that in many instances zero can be maintained. We’ve also seen that reducing infections can significantly improve a healthcare institution’s financial bottom line. All institutions should be adopting evidence-based interventions to reduce CLABSIs and ensuring that these measures are consistently applied.

“But prevention can only occur when top leaders target zero as their goal, invest in their infection prevention programs to assure the resources needed for optimal programs -- including resources necessary to track, monitor and publicly report these infections, and make infection prevention and control everyone’s job across the institution. Healthcare leaders must understand the cost of infections erodes the bottom line, and they need to allocate the resources to infection prevention making it an institution-wide priority.

“At a time when HAIs threaten the public health, infection prevention departments at healthcare facilities need to be growing, not shrinking. Unfortunately, a 2009 APIC survey http://www.apic.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Economic_Survey_2009&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=13565 showed that 41 percent of hospitals in the U.S. are cutting staff, resources and education for infection prevention in response to the economic downturn.

“APIC’s *Targeting Zero*

http://www.apic.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Targeting_Zero2&Template=/CM/ContentDispla

[y.cfm&ContentID=13484](#) initiative provides education to help prevent the most common and deadly HAIs. APIC's evidence-based elimination guides translate CDC recommendations into straightforward infection prevention strategies for healthcare workers.

“Protecting patients from harm is the motivation to eliminate preventable infections and is the right thing to do for our patients and for our healthcare institutions.”

APIC's mission is to improve health and patient safety by reducing risks of infection and other adverse outcomes. The association's more than 13,000 members direct infection prevention programs that save lives and improve the bottom line for hospitals and other healthcare facilities around the globe. APIC advances its mission through education, research, collaboration, practice guidance, public policy and credentialing. Visit APIC online at www.apic.org. For consumer-related information, visit <http://www.preventinfection.org>.