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Hospital-Specific Infection Rates Made Public *New Website a Tool for Consumers and Hospitals*

Today, the Washington State Department of Health unveils its new hospital infection rate reporting website. The website at www.doh.wa.gov/ehsphi/hai/0_hai_default.htm provides hospital-specific data on two important types of infections patients are vulnerable to in a hospital. The same data will soon be posted on the Washington State Hospital Association's hospital quality website at www.wahospitalquality.org.

“Washington’s hospitals are enthusiastic participants in providing this new information about hospital infection rates,” said Carol Wagner, vice president for patient safety at the Washington State Hospital Association. “We believe that public reporting offers information that helps hospitals improve, assists consumers in making good decisions about hospital care, and creates the opportunity for collaboration between hospitals and quality experts.”

The two types of infections are central line bloodstream infections and ventilator-associated pneumonia. Washington’s hospitals use a series of scientifically proven safeguards against these infections.

To prevent ventilator-associated pneumonia, hospitals keep the beds of ventilated patients at a 30 degree angle, attempt daily to wean the patient from the ventilator, and give patients regular oral care. To prevent central line bloodstream infections, hospitals use proper hand hygiene, have carts or kits that contain all necessary components for inserting the central line safely, cover the patient with a large sterile drape during the procedure, and ensure all health care personnel involved in placing the central line wear a mask, cap, sterile gown, and sterile gloves.

Washington’s hospitals are dedicated to stopping the spread of infections. Stopping infections is challenging work: hospital patients have grown sicker and more vulnerable; drug resistant organisms are increasing in our society; and antibiotic overuse has affected people’s abilities to fight off infections.

Hospital patients are an important part of their own care team and have a role to play in preventing infections. Things patients can do to protect themselves include:

- Taking all the pre-hospitalization infection prevention steps their doctor recommends, such as pre-surgical chlorhexidine baths, not shaving before surgery, and stopping smoking;

- Asking all their health care providers and visitors to wash or sanitize their hands, especially when they enter or leave a patient's room;
- Taking antibiotics and other medications exactly as directed by their doctor; and
- Asking their visitors to stay home if they are sick in any way.

“Hospitals are dedicated to the care and comfort of our patients. In most cases, the data show good results, though there are also areas for improvement. Our member hospitals are working hard to implement changes to stop the spread of infections, and we expect the data to get better and better,” concluded Wagner.

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