

News for Immediate Release

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Governor Rendell Releases Report Showing Marked Improvements in Healthcare-Associated Infections

Harrisburg – Pennsylvania’s ongoing efforts to protect patients from unnecessary infections in healthcare settings are bringing measurable results, Governor Edward G. Rendell said today as he released a report showing marked improvements in the number of healthcare-associated infections, or HAIs, reported by hospitals.

From 2008 to 2009, there was a 12.5 percent decrease in HAIs, which are infections that patients acquired while in a healthcare setting and were not present when they were admitted for care.

“Curbing – and ultimately eliminating – healthcare-associated infections is an urgent priority for two reasons: doing so prevents unnecessary illnesses and deaths, and it also helps to help eliminate the avoidable costs of treating these infections,” said Governor Rendell. “While the 12.5 percent decline in HAIs is encouraging, there is still more important work remaining to be done.”

The data is reported by hospitals under Act 52, which Governor Rendell signed in 2007 as part of his continuing efforts to improve the quality and delivery of health care under his Prescription for Pennsylvania initiative.

“Pennsylvania is a national leader in addressing the challenge of eliminating HAIs as a public health concern,” said Governor Rendell. “Patients should not have to worry that simply being admitted to the hospital could put them at

risk for acquiring a serious but preventable illness. And curbing HAIs will go a long way toward controlling the cost of health care.”

In addition to being one of the top causes of excess illness and death in the U.S., HAIs produce extra days of hospitalization and drive up health care costs. In Pennsylvania alone, HAIs have been cumulatively estimated to drive up costs by more than \$3 billion annually. Nationwide, the cost estimate is more than \$30 billion per year.

A total of 25,914 HAIs was reported by the 250 hospitals that were in continuous operation during 2009. This translates to an overall statewide rate of 2.37 HAIs per 1,000 patient days of hospitalization. If you adjust the 2008 numbers to a 12-month time frame, the data suggests there is a 12.5 percent decrease in the number of HAIs between the two time periods.

The report includes HAIs for each hospital, with an emphasis on two specific infection types: urinary tract infections associated with the use of a catheter (CAUTI) and bloodstream infections associated with the use of a central line (CLABSI). These infections are among the more common HAIs and were selected by the department and the HAI Advisory Committee for hospital-to-hospital comparisons and to measure trends over time. Future reports will analyze the patterns of another common type of HAI known as surgical site infections.

The most commonly reported HAIs in 2009 were surgical site infections (24.2 percent), urinary tract infections (23.7 percent), gastrointestinal infections (18.7 percent), and blood stream infections (12.6 percent). Among the urinary tract infections, 64 percent were associated with a urinary

catheter. Among the blood stream infections, 67 percent were associated with a central line.

The report shows that 16 hospitals, or 6 percent of all hospitals in Pennsylvania, had better-than-expected performance measures in both of the infection categories highlighted in the report. Eleven hospitals, or 4 percent, had worse-than-expected performance measures in both categories.

The report includes data that will serve as a baseline for rates of healthcare-associated infections in Pennsylvania and is the first measure of progress toward decreasing those infections.

The report is based on information submitted by hospitals in Pennsylvania, beginning in February 2008, to the National Healthcare Safety Network, a system maintained and operated by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC. Hospitals are required to report the infection within 48 hours of their recognition. The state Department of Health is responsible for analyzing the data and producing an annual report.

The Department of Health released the data as required by Act 52, the Reduction and Prevention of Health Care Associated Infection and Long-Term Care of Nursing Facilities. Though not required by law, the department did release a report in January 2010 that included data reported for the last half of 2008. However, since that report did not include a full year's worth of data, it could not be used to establish initial rates of HAIs in the Commonwealth.

Act 52 is part of Governor Rendell's Prescription for Pennsylvania, a comprehensive blueprint for improving

access, quality and affordability of health care. The Governor's goal is to ensure every Pennsylvania resident has access to quality and affordable health care. The ultimate goal of Act 52 is to produce consistent reductions in the occurrence of HAIs in order to eliminate them entirely.

To read the full report and review a list of higher-than-expected and lower-than-expected performers, visit the Department of Health online at www.health.state.pa.us. For more information on HAIs, visit www.cleanhandssavelives.org.

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