

# **Massachusetts Coalition** **for the** **Prevention of Medical Errors**

## **Coalition Announces Commitment to Work to Eliminate Hospital-Acquired Infections in Acute Care Hospitals**

The US Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that annual hospital-acquired infections in the US number over 2 million, resulting in 90,000 deaths a year and \$4.5 billion in excess healthcare costs. The research shows a range of cost estimates, some suggesting excess costs may be two to four times that amount. In long-term care facilities, the CDC estimates an additional 1.5 million health-care associated infections occur each year.

Based on this CDC estimates of infections nationally, patients in the commonwealth of Massachusetts are suffering more than 45,000 hospital-acquired infections each year, and nearly 2,000 deaths as a result of these infections. Successful implementation of safe practices to prevent these infections might save from \$200 – \$473 million annually in healthcare costs, and more importantly reduce the human suffering of patients and families from the death and disability resulting from these infections.

The Massachusetts Coalition for the Prevention of Medical Errors is committed to working to eliminate hospital-acquired infections in acute care hospitals. The Coalition will work with clinicians and hospital leaders to make rapid, meaningful, and long-lasting changes in care while partnering with patients and families to prevent infections.

The Coalition's goal is elimination of the most common, fatal and costly hospital-acquired infections in hospitals throughout Massachusetts. The Coalition will work to have 100 percent participation in this initiative from hospitals in Massachusetts by the end of 2007, to eliminate ventilator-associated pneumonia and central line-associated blood stream infections by the end of 2008, and to reduce hospital-acquired methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, a hazardous drug resistant form of this infection known as MRSA, by 80 percent by the end of that same year. By the end of 2009, the goal is to eliminate all these hospital-acquired infections.

This is clearly an extremely ambitious goal, which has not been achieved anywhere in the country. In the case of eliminating MRSA transmission in the hospital, there are still substantial controversies about the science, and safe practices to achieve this goal. But the goal represents our vision for safe care for patients in our hospitals.

The Coalition strongly supports public reporting of clinically meaningful measures of hospital infections. This is the transparency required from our healthcare system; consumers should have such information on the safety and quality of their healthcare. The Coalition strongly supports the work of the Massachusetts Expert Panel on Health-Care Associated Infections, organized under auspices of Betsy Lehman Center and the Department of Public Health, which will recommend best practices for infection control and appropriate measures for valid infection rate reporting, under the provisions of the Chapter 58.

Providing hospitals with recommended best practices, however, does not guarantee successful implementation and measurable results. Even regulatory requirements cannot achieve this aim. The science of patient safety has demonstrated the organizational challenges that can defeat even the best faith efforts without a skilled approach to implementation.

Through the involvement and support of Coalition member organizations, the Coalition's program would share successful implementation strategies among hospitals, engage senior leadership to ensure support for the improvement teams in hospitals, and reach out to engage and activate consumers as partners in their care, and advocates and advisors for improvement. The Coalition's initiative will include educational programs to support these systems improvements, and promote patient and family advisory councils, and the engagement of consumers with clinicians in improving care.

The Coalition previously led a statewide initiative to implement two priority safe practices in Massachusetts hospitals, in partnership with the Department of Public Health and the Massachusetts Hospital Association. Based on the Coalition's work, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations adopted these safe practices as requirements for all hospitals nationally.

The Coalition relies on the expertise, efforts, and involvement of all of its members to achieve its goals. Together, the Coalition and its members are committing to this significant improvement in healthcare in our state, making Massachusetts healthcare the safest in the nation.