



NATIONAL CENTER FOR POLICY ANALYSIS

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PATIENT ADVOCATES CALL ON THE CDC TO DO MORE TO STOP HOSPITAL INFECTION

New York, NY (December 30, 2005) – The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local public health officials should make hospital infection prevention a New Year’s resolution, according to Betsy McCaughey, Ph.D., a health policy expert and Chairman of the Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths (RID).

RID released a report, *Unnecessary Deaths*, calling on the CDC and local health officials to do more to stop hospital infection deaths. The report, co-sponsored by the National Center for Policy Analysis, alerts the public to the grave financial and human consequences of poor infection control in American hospitals and demonstrates that these infections are almost all preventable through improvements in hospital procedures and hygiene.

“One out of every twenty patients gets an infection *in the hospital*,” said McCaughey. “Infections that have been nearly eradicated in some countries—such as MRSA (*methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus*)—are raging through hospitals in the United States.

In the U.S., the danger is growing worse. Increasingly hospital infections cannot be cured with commonly used antibiotics.

These infections are almost all preventable. *Unnecessary Deaths* documents the success of U.S. hospitals that have reduced infections by 85% or more in pilot programs. “Betsy McCaughey’s research dispels the myth that infection is the inevitable and unavoidable risk of being hospitalized,” according to NCPA President, John C. Goodman.

Hospital infections add \$30 billion a year to the nation’s hospital costs, the report shows.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are partly to blame. “The CDC has delayed calling on all hospitals to institute the rigorous precautions that are working in other countries and in the few U.S. hospitals that have tried them,” says McCaughey. “CDC standard precautions are far less effective in preventing hospital infections. Every year of delay has cost thousands of lives and billions of dollars. The CDC constantly says it is preparing to do more, but fails to act. The CDC has spent 25 years tracking the rise of deadly drug resistant infections in hospitals, but has done too little to stop it.”

Inadequate infection control in hospitals is poor homeland security and poor preparation for an avian flu threat. “Hospitals that lack the discipline and training to stop ordinary bacterial infections from spreading from patient to patient are unprepared for the larger challenge of stopping avian flu or bioterrorism pathogens from sweeping through their institutions,” McCaughey added.

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FAMILIES HARMED BY HOSPITAL INFECTION WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE.

Editors’ note: Dr. Barry Farr, professor of internal medicine at the University of Virginia, and Dr. Carlene Muto, professor of epidemiology and medicine at the University of Pittsburgh, are excellent sources on preventing hospital infections, and their work is featured in this report. Dr. Farr can be reached at (434) 977-1297 or bmfarr@adelphia.net. Dr. Muto can be reached at (412) 692-2566 or mutoca@msx.upmc.edu.

The Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths (<http://www.hospitalinfection.org>) is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to providing hospital administrators, caregivers, insurers, and patients with the information they need to stop hospital infections. The NCPA is an internationally known nonprofit, nonpartisan research institute with offices in Dallas and Washington, D. C. that advocates private solutions to public policy problems.