



NEWS RELEASE

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Alabama receives top ranking in infection prevention

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alabama was one of only two states in the nation performing better than the national infection rate on three of four infection categories, according to a new report released today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Alabama Department of Public Health commends Alabama's hospitals for their outstanding work to prevent healthcare-associated infections.

The report provided state-by-state analysis on four categories of infections reported to the CDC's infection database; using 2012 data, the state's infection rate was compared to the national baseline. Alabama and California were the only two states to perform better than the national baseline on three of the four categories. No state performed better on all four.

"The CDC's report underscores what we've already identified in our state, which is significant progress in infection prevention," said State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson. "Our department began providing a state level report on hospital infection rates in 2011, and while our report was slightly different than the federal report in terms of the units reported, we looked at the same infection categories."

According to the CDC report, Alabama performed better than the nation on catheter-associated urinary tract infections and two types of surgical site infections, one from colon surgery and one from abdominal hysterectomies. The state did not perform at the national baseline on central line-associated blood stream infections.

"Alabama's success is primarily due to collaboration," said L. Keith Granger, CEO of Trinity Medical Center in Birmingham and chairman of the Alabama Hospital Association's Quality Task Force. "For the past 10 years, we've worked with our state's largest insurer and an automated infection surveillance product to provide hospitals with real time data to help prevent the spread of infections. We've brought quality and infection practitioners to a common table to share best practices and lessons learned, and we've worked with our partners in public health to improve our infection reporting practices and to ensure transparency of the information. It's truly been a team effort."

J. Michael Horsley, president of the Alabama Hospital Association, echoed Granger's comments noting that infection prevention has been an important focus of Alabama's hospitals for some time. "Our hospital leaders stepped up to the plate early on when they realized the tremendous impact infections were having on their patients and discovered that there were evidence-based practices that could almost totally eliminate some infections," said Horsley. "It's been a concerted effort on the part of our hospitals, and it's paid off in better care for patients."

All parties agreed that the fight against infections is far from over and that continued vigilance is needed. "With the growing resistance to certain antibiotics and the increase in community acquired infections, hospitals must constantly monitor patients and their environments to quickly detect infections, treat them and prevent their spread," added Dr. Williamson. "I believe the data we publicly report helps highlight the good work of hospital staff and identify where additional efforts are needed."

Hospital-specific infection rates can be found at adph.org or at jointhehealthjourney.com.