

**HHS Action Plan to Prevent Healthcare-Associated Infections:
MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY SECRETARY**

At the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), our number one priority is to help protect the health of all Americans and provide essential human services, especially for those who are least able to help themselves. We envision a healthcare system where:

- care is safe, effective, timely, equitable, and patient-centered;
- healthcare is value-driven, based on price and quality;
- consumers know the cost and quality of their healthcare;
- information technology enables immediate access to accurate information that reduces dangerous medical errors; and
- discovery and innovation support higher quality and safer medical care.

Reducing preventable healthcare-associated infections nationally is an important component of us achieving the HHS mission and vision.

Healthcare-associated infections are one of the top ten leading causes of death in the United States, accounting for an estimated 99,000 deaths associated with the infections and billions of additional healthcare costs in 2002. Despite their pervasiveness, these infections are largely preventable.

I have asked the best clinicians, scientists, and other public health professionals within HHS to come together and develop a roadmap for addressing this important public health and patient safety issue in the short and long term. This “Action Plan to Prevent Healthcare-Associated Infections” represents a culmination of several months of research and deliberation to identify the key actions needed to achieve and sustain progress in protecting patients from the transmission of serious, and in some cases, deadly infections.

The development of this action plan was no insignificant task. As the issue crosses all of the HHS Operating Divisions, we are mobilizing the full breadth of our current staff resources to aggressively implement this solid, scientific plan. The goal is to propel us, as a nation, toward building a safer, more affordable healthcare system for all Americans.

I have personally heard from many Americans and been touched by their stories of how they have been affected by healthcare-associated infections. Undoubtedly, reducing the impact of these infections across the United States will help reduce healthcare costs, but more importantly it will help save the lives of fathers, mothers, siblings, and loved ones and help us continue on our path to being a healthier, stronger, and more compassionate Nation.

Tevi D. Troy