



May 22, 2008

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman
Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-6143

RE: Healthcare-Associated Infections

Dear Congressman Waxman:

I am writing to respond to your letter of May 6, 2008 in which your committee requested information from the Kansas Hospital Association (KHA) on healthcare-associated infections. In this ever-changing health care environment, many groups are asking for data on quality to be reported both publicly and privately. As you might expect, this has resulted in enormous amounts of hospital staff time and energy on the task of reporting information when some may suggest that such resources are more urgently needed at the bedside. Nevertheless, we understand and support the need for increased transparency with regard to information that is reliable and useful without being duplicative or overly burdensome.

The short answer to your main question is that Kansas hospitals are not required by state law to report healthcare-associated infections to a state agency. As a result, our association is unable to provide the information you requested on the median and overall rates of central line-associated bloodstream infections in intensive care units.

Despite any specific state statutes, there are many activities in Kansas that are relevant to your inquiry. KHA along with the Kansas Medical Society is in the process of creating the Kansas Health Care Collaborative, a provider-led initiative designed to promote quality health care through improvements in clinical practices, health and patient safety. This Collaborative embodies the commitment of the state's two largest health groups to continuously enhance the quality of care provided in Kansas as well as improving the overall health of our population. Through a variety of programs, this project will initiate focused, provider-directed efforts to facilitate engagement, communication, data-sharing and best practices. We envision the Collaborative to be supportive of and complementary

to ongoing state and national quality and patient safety initiatives including that of infection prevention.

KHA is also a member of the Kansas Health Policy Authority's Data Consortium, a state-wide advisory committee comprised of stakeholders who generate, manage and use health data. The Data Consortium is presently identifying the information it will use as a basis of its annual report on the health of Kansas.

To decrease the number of healthcare-associated infections, which are often caused by the lack of proper hand washing, this summer KHA will be distributing to Kansas hospitals a toolkit entitled, *Infection Prevention: Hand Hygiene Tools and Resources*. This manual was written with the assistance of infection control professionals from small, medium and large hospitals across the state and provides information on infection surveillance, regulatory compliance and standards as well as information on preventing Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA), Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococci (VRE), Clostridium Difficile (C. Diff.) and other multi-drug resistant organisms. The manual also provides information for educating healthcare workers, patients, families and communities about the need for proper hand washing to decrease both healthcare-associated and community-acquired infections.

Twenty allied organizations of KHA meet on a regular basis to provide educational opportunities and information to their members representing all Kansas hospitals. One of these groups, the Kansas Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology has three chapters in our state and conducts educational seminars with updates on current infection prevention trends and practices. By bringing these professionals together to discuss current organisms, infection rates and prevention activities, the latest in infection prevention is shared across the entire state.

Our state's Quality Improvement Organization, the Kansas Foundation for Medical Care, works closely with KHA and provides infection control guidance to our hospitals via national programs including the Surgical Care Improvement Project (SCIP) which requires hospitals to provide prophylactic antibiotics to surgical patients within one hour of surgery. Many of our hospitals are also involved with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's 5 Million Lives Campaign which focuses on patient safety including the prevention of central line and surgical site infections and ventilator-associated pneumonia.

Through educational seminars which teach best practices, providing resources such as the hand hygiene toolkit and by creating initiatives such as the Kansas Health Care Collaborative, KHA will continue to stress the importance of preventing the occurrence of healthcare-associated infections.

If you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Tom Bell
President

Cc: Minority Office
Sarah Despres via e-mail