

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**News Release**Office of Public Affairs
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(202) 461-7600
www.va.govFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 7, 2014**VA Sharply Reduces Drug-Resistant Staph Infections in Hospitalized Veterans**
VA Best Practices Lead the Industry and Serve as a Model

WASHINGTON – A Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) initiative targeting potentially life-threatening staph infections in hospitalized patients has produced significant positive results, according to recent statistics released by VA. VA’s success in substantially reducing rates of health care-associated infection with methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) serves as important confirmation that multifaceted intervention strategies can achieve effective and sustained control of MRSA in U.S. hospitals.

“VA has a well-earned reputation in successful prevention of MRSA,” said VA Secretary Robert McDonald. “Delivering high-quality care to our Veterans when they are in our hospitals is a responsibility that we do not take lightly. The drop in MRSA rates shows that we are pursuing the right course for prevention and treatment. The results that we have achieved mean better health care for our Veterans and that care ultimately benefits *all* Americans.”

Among VA patients in intensive care units (ICU) between 2007 and 2012, healthcare-associated MRSA infection rates dropped 72 percent—from 1.64 to 0.46 per 1,000 patient days. Infection rates dropped 66 percent—from 0.47 to 0.16 per 1,000 patient days—for patients treated in non-ICU hospital units.

“These results are striking,” said Dr. Carolyn Clancy, VA’s Interim Under Secretary for Health. “Health care-associated infections are a [major challenge](#) throughout the [health care industry](#), but we have found in VA that consistently applying some simple preventive strategies can make a very big difference, and *that* difference is being [recognized](#). ”

VA’s prevention practices consist of patient screening programs for MRSA, contact precautions for hospitalized patients found to have MRSA, and hand hygiene reminders with readily available hand sanitizer stations placed strategically in common areas, patient wards, and specialty clinics throughout medical centers. Computerized reminders, online training, frequent measurement, and continual feedback to medical staff reinforce such practices.

Additionally, VA has created a culture that promotes infection prevention and control as everyone's responsibility. A major part of that commitment is a dedicated employee at each VA medical center exclusively for the purpose of monitoring compliance with MRSA protection procedures, training staff, and working with Veteran patients and families.

MRSA infections are a serious global health care issue and are difficult to treat because the bacterium is resistant to many antibiotics. In a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2012 MRSA surveillance report from its [Active Bacterial Core surveillance \(ABCs\)](#), the CDC cites that there were 75,309 cases of invasive MRSA infections and 9,670 deaths due to invasive MRSA in 2012.

“The VA health care system is able to implement and assess these prevention strategies,” said Dr. Martin Evans, director of VA's MRSA control program. “What we've learned translates into better health care for the Veterans we serve.”

With over 8 million Veterans enrolled, VA operates the largest integrated health care delivery system in the United States conducting this type of large-scale, organized prevention program and documenting its impact.

For more information about VA health care, visit <http://www.va.gov/health/>.

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