



HACs Drop but More Work to be Done



A recent federal report reveals that the rate of avoidable complications affecting patients in hospitals levelled off in 2014 after three years of continuous declines.

While hospitals have been successful at averting different types of injuries, they are still struggling to avert complications with broader causes and less clear-cut solutions. In 2014, 4 million infections and other avoidable hospital injuries were reported. The most common of these were bed sores, falls, reaction to diabetes drugs, and kidney damage.

Frequency of hospital complications declined by 17 percent in 2010 but were the same as in 2013. While stable, the lack of improvement suggests that is still difficult for hospitals to further reduce the risk of these injuries and complications.

During the Obama administration, hospitals have implemented several patient safety initiatives such as Medicare penalties for hospitals that are not performing up to the mark, increase in the use of electronic records and collaboration among medical providers.

The report calculated rates for 27 specific complications from 30,000 medical cases. There were 2.1 million fewer incidents of harm (such as infections, medicine reactions and other complications) since 2010, 87,000 fewer deaths and healthcare savings of approximately \$20 billion. The most important progress was the decline in the number of infections from central lines inserted into veins which declined by 72 percent from 2010. Infections from urinary catheters declined by 38 percent while surgical infections declined by 18 percent. There was also a 30 percent reduction in the number of blood clots that form after surgery and travel to the lung.

“Hospitals work diligently every day to provide the best possible care for the patients they serve. These new numbers are impressive and show the great progress hospitals continue to make,” said Rick Pollack, president and CEO of the [American Hospital Association](#). “While there is always more work to be done to improve patient safety, the collaborative efforts of hospitals and HHS have delivered great results that will continue to help the field on the quality improvement journey.”

However, there was not sufficient improvement in reducing the number of falls or pneumonia cases in patients breathing through mechanical ventilators. In addition, adverse drug reactions and complications during childbirth were higher in 2014 than what they were estimated to be. Infections from MRSA increased by 55 percent and there was a 25 percent increase in the number of times a catheter punctured a femoral artery during an angiography.

Source: [Health & Human Services](#)

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