

PART 6: CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

I. COORDINATION OF EFFORTS

Since the start of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS's) department-wide initiative on health care-associated infection (HAI) in 2008 and the publication of the initial *National Action Plan to Prevent Health Care-Associated Infections: Road Map to Elimination* (HAI Action Plan) in 2009, substantial progress has been made in reducing HAIs in the United States. As a component of the Partnership for Patients, the HAI initiative is now focused on the accelerated reduction of HAIs through a new national collaborative effort that calls upon diverse private and public sector participants and engages consumers as full partners in achieving this goal.

The success of the HAI prevention effort will require effective coordination across the federal government and between the participating departments and key stakeholders nationwide. A synchronized effort must involve consistent communication among all the organizations involved in the initiative. This enhanced communication will allow for problems to be approached in a holistic fashion rather than being treated as disparate parts. Activities and initiatives already in existence or those in development within one agency can be identified, targeted, and leveraged to aid acceleration of progress towards common goals.

Success will require that all parties take a measure of responsibility for ensuring that every patient is protected. The goal of eliminating HAIs can be accomplished only if several elements of the effort are in place: a network of highly engaged participants working together and steadily advancing innovation through research; timely, credible, reliable, and validated surveillance and monitoring of data; access to the latest information in state-of-the-art best practices; support of leaders and executives in hospitals, health care organizations, professional societies, and government; partnerships between health care providers and state and local public health officials; and full engagement of health care consumers.

HHS can and will serve to coordinate, facilitate, and support this national network of committed partners. Ultimately, consumers will require access to information that allows them to make fully informed choices regarding their health care and to represent themselves and their families in the health care delivery process. Professionals must be able to work in a culture of safety within an environment that permits any member of the health care team to act in every case and at all times in the best interest of the patient without fear of adverse consequences. Leaders and executives must support an environment of complete transparency in high-quality care without undue concern for risk to their institution in a highly competitive marketplace.

Given the extraordinary complexity of modern health care, the fact that the elimination of HAIs has become a foreseeable goal is a powerful testament to the dedication and commitment of

health care personnel to the well-being of their patients. HHS will continue the activities that have contributed to advances in patient safety to this time:

- The Federal Steering Committee for the Prevention of Health Care-Associated Infections will continue to support collaboration and integration of departmental efforts to support the goal of elimination.
- The HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health will continue to facilitate communication, networking, and the sharing of information through proactive outreach to governmental and nongovernmental partners.
- The Steering Committee will continue to monitor national progress toward achievement of the specific goals set in the original and any successor HAI Action Plans.
- The Steering Committee will continue to support innovative research projects and demonstration programs in collaboration with operating and staff divisions across HHS as well as with stakeholders.
- The Steering Committee will continue to evaluate programmatic efforts in order to constantly improve HHS's approach to HAI elimination.

II. CONCLUSION

HHS has a long and proud history of steadily and substantially improving the health and welfare of Americans. Despite this progress, at any given time, about one in every 20 hospitalized patients has an HAI, while over 1 million HAIs occur across the health care system every year. The good news is that in the United States we can now define these infections as “unacceptable” and can foresee their elimination.

The lives saved, the disability and suffering prevented, and the excess costs of care saved make the Partnership for Patients a top HHS priority. As a component in the Partnership, we believe that the success achieved to date in reducing the burden of HAIs has been only the first part of a national movement that will transform patient safety and the quality of health care. We are confident that the end result will be a safer and healthier America.