

## **Hospital infections list can be found online**

### **DHEC database compares incidents in S.C. hospitals to national averages**

By Mary Jo Balasco · 2009 The Herald  
Updated 02/25/09 - 9:19 AM |

A new report that details how many people get infections while being treated at state hospitals -- including Rock Hill's Piedmont Medical Center -- is now available online from the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control.

The first report, available on DHEC's Web site, documents those infections and compares them with similar hospitals nationwide, said Dixie Roberts, a spokeswoman for the agency.

The number of infections a hospital reports for a procedure is organized into a chart and can be compared to that of similar hospitals in the nation. For some surgical procedures and some lines placed in a vein, the number of infections a hospital reports is compared to the national average. The hospital is given a rating of "not different," "lower" or "higher" than the national average for similar hospitals.

Hospital acquired infections increase the cost and length of a hospital stay. In some instances these infections can cause death, Roberts said. Each year, 1.7 million such infections occur in hospitals and result in 99,000 deaths and \$20 billion in related health costs, according to a 2002 study released by the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention.

In 2006, the S.C. General Assembly passed the Hospital Infections Disclosure Act, a law requiring hospitals to provide DHEC and the public with information about their acquired infection rates. The information must be submitted twice a year.

Beginning in July 2007, hospitals were required to report some of their acquired infections related to certain procedures. Since then, other procedures have been phased in resulting in an annual report that spans from July 2007 through Nov. 30, 2008. Future yearly reports will contain data for only one year, Roberts said.

Roberts said people checking the site should not compare the number of infections for a procedure listed by one S.C. hospital to the number in another S.C. hospital, because hospitals are measured by different variables.

"Hospitals that take the sickest of the sick, like major teaching hospitals, may have more hospital acquired infections because the patients they treat are at a higher risk," Roberts said.

Dr. Richard Patterson, chief medical officer for Piedmont Medical Center in Rock Hill, said the Web site is a good resource for someone facing a surgical procedure, but some of the information could be difficult to interpret.

"For the lay population, it's tricky stuff," he said.

Both Roberts and Patterson say a person considering a hospital should not base their choice only on the information found in the infections report. Roberts suggests that if a person is concerned with the information listed in the report, they should visit the hospital's Web site to research its

explanation of the data or discuss it with a hospital representative or their doctor.

Patterson said Piedmont has been working to keep its infection rates low by making changes to some of its policies and procedures, such as routinely giving patients an antibiotic one hour before a surgical procedure and removing hair from a surgical site with clippers instead of a razor. Research has shown these changes have drastically reduced infection rates at other hospitals, Patterson said. Piedmont also recently joined the South Carolina Healthcare Quality Trust, a voluntary hospital and research university effort to lower hospital infection rates.

"We've put a big effort into it," he said.

Recently, hospitals have been under increasing pressure to eliminate these types of infections, Patterson said.

Since October, many insurance companies, along with Medicare and Medicaid, have stopped reimbursing hospitals for treatment of hospital acquired infections, meaning the hospital is responsible for the cost, Patterson said.

DHEC checks the accuracy and completeness of the data through a process that includes hospital visits and reviews of computer reports and records.

As hospitals submit data, the goal of the site is to report infection trends -- whether the hospital is getting worse or better, Roberts said.

[here.](#)

Infection prevention
How to prevent infections while being treated in a hospital:  -- Make sure all doctors, nurses, aides and other health care providers wash their hands with soap or an alcohol based hand sanitizer before and after they care for you.  -- If you don't see them clean their hands, ask them to do so.
<b>PIEDMONT INFECTION STATS</b>
Hospital acquired infection data reported by Piedmont Medical Center as compared with similar hospitals nationwide:
<i>Surgical Site infections:</i>
<i>Procedures reported January 1, 2007 to Nov. 30, 2008</i>
-- Hip prosthesis (replacement):
Number of reported infections: 0
Number of procedures performed: 114
Compares nationally: not different

-- Knee prosthesis (replacement)

Number of reported infections: 1

Number of procedures performed: 205

Compares nationally: not different

-- Cholecystectomy (Gallbladder removal)

Number of reported infections: 0

Number of procedures performed: 178

Compares nationally: not different

-- Coronary Artery Bypass Graft (chest and donor incision)

Number of reported infections: 1

Number of procedures performed: 178

Compares nationally: lower

-- Coronary Artery Bypass Graft (chest incision only)

-- Number of reported infections: 0

-- Number of procedures performed: 19

-- Compares nationally: not different

*Central Line Associated Blood Stream infections:*

*Procedures reported July 1, 2007 to Nov. 30, 2008*

-- Medical/Surgical Critical Care Unit

Number of reported infections: 7

Total number of central line days: 2,880

Compares nationally: not different

-- Adult Surgical Critical Care Unit

Number of reported infections: 0

Total number of central line days: 145

Compares nationally: not different

Source: S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control

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