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EXPERTS SUPPORT NATIONAL PUBLIC REPORTING OF HEALTHCARE-ASSOCIATED INFECTIONS

Stronger Efforts Needed on Drug-Resistant Organisms

Washington, July 20, 2009 – Five organizations representing the nation’s experts in infectious diseases medicine, infection prevention in healthcare settings, and public health and disease prevention announced their support for a provision requiring national reporting of healthcare-associated infection (HAI) rates, which is contained within the healthcare reform bill introduced by leaders of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC), the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA), the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) and the Trust for America’s Health (TFAH) sent a joint letter to members of Congress who will be voting on the legislation (HR 3200, the America’s Affordable Health Choices Act) in the coming days.

The bill would require hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers to report HAI data through an existing national reporting network managed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a condition of participation in Medicare and Medicaid.

“Overall -- this is a win for patients,” said APIC 2009 President Christine J. Nutty, RN, MSN, CIC. “Public reporting of HAIs may drive further improvement in healthcare processes which will reduce infections, save lives, and preserve healthcare dollars. We are pleased that the House bill would also address the need for highly trained staff to effectively implement the system.”

In the U.S., HAIs claim 99,000 lives annually and incur more than \$20 billion in excess healthcare costs.

“This legislation will assure accountability and transparency as the nation moves to address this growing public health problem,” said Jeffrey Levi, PhD, Executive Director of Trust for America’s Health. “Patients have a right to know how well they are protected from healthcare-associated infections and this level of openness will encourage healthcare facilities to improve their outcomes.”

The groups agreed that the public reporting provision found in HR 3200 is superior to approaches that have been put forth in other legislation. HR 3200 will establish a single national standard for HAI reporting, and it will ensure that public health scientists at CDC determine which infections are reported and how. By mandating reporting via CDC's National Healthcare Safety Network, the bill will build on existing mechanisms and create the robust system we need to monitor, study, and ultimately prevent HAIs.

"Using CDC's network means that everyone will be looking for the same information in the same way," said Mark E. Rupp, MD, president of SHEA. "This approach for HAI reporting will be a more accurate way to compare local and national infection rates and trends. This will give us the science base we need to better prevent HAIs."

One element missing from the bill, the organizations noted, was the lack of a much-needed, strengthened federal approach to deal with antimicrobial resistant organisms.

"Overall, we applaud the approach taken on public reporting," said Anne Gershon, MD, FIDSA, president of IDSA. "However, we hope congressional leaders also will adopt new strategies to address drug-resistant pathogens, which are the cause of so many debilitating infections and patient deaths in healthcare facilities each year."

To address antimicrobial resistant organisms, the groups have urged Congress to amend HR 3200 to include the Strategies to Address Antimicrobial Resistance (STAAR) Act, H.R. 2400, introduced earlier this year by Rep. Jim Matheson (R-UT), which will build up federal efforts on surveillance, research, and prevention and control of drug-resistant infections.

APIC's mission is to improve health and patient safety by reducing risks of infection and other adverse outcomes. The association's more than 12,000 members direct infection prevention programs in healthcare facilities around the globe. See www.apic.org.

The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) represents more than 8,600 infectious diseases physicians and scientists devoted to patient care, education, research, and public health. See www.idsociety.org.

The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) represents 1,500 physicians, infection control practitioners, and other healthcare professionals dedicated to maintaining the utmost quality of patient care and healthcare worker safety in all healthcare settings. See www.shea-online.org.

Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE), a professional association of over 1,150 members, represents the interests of public health epidemiologists for the 50 States, 6 Territories, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. See www.cste.org.

Trust for America's Health (TFAH) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority. See healthyamericans.org.

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