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Hospitals' Responsibility in Reducing Community Risks of Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) Infections: Response to APIC and SHEA Statement

Should hospitals routinely test patients for MRSA is under review by various State Governments. Two major epidemiology organizations have argued against such a provision. The counter argument is that such measures, along with testing healthcare personnel, will help reduce community levels of MRSA.

/24-7PressRelease/ - BURBANK, CA, March 08, 2007 - The recent APIC and SHEA joint position statement on the use of active surveillance cultures to screen for MRSA and VRE bacteria,* fails to address the continuing spread of MRSA bacteria from healthcare facilities to the community. No longer is susceptibility to MRSA infections restricted to hospitalized patients. Rather, the entire population is at risk by the increasing presence of MRSA bacteria in the community environment. Healthcare providers colonized by MRSA have been, and continue to be, an unwitting source of these bacteria within the community. So too are individuals who inadvertently acquire MRSA as hospitalized patients and are not informed or treated prior to discharge.

The position statement expresses concern that legislation requiring routine surveillance testing of patients would exclude a role of local experts in risk assessments and resource allocation. One wonders where these experts were during the growing emergence over the last 15 years of highly toxic strains of MRSA. Are healthcare personnel so uninformed by these experts that they would not want to know if they are placing not only their patients, but themselves, family members and social contacts at risk of a serious infection? Who has the responsibility to inform the public of their civil right to test their homes, workplaces and other public facilities for MRSA? The issue of cost of testing is moot. Sensitive, yet simple MRSA detection plates are available at little more than \$1.50 per plate. These plates have been distributed by the Institute of Progressive Medicine to the Martin Luther King Junior International Youth Foundation and other civil rights groups. It would be ironic if the responsibility of hospital epidemiologists and Public Health officials were to fall upon the shoulders of community based volunteers. For further information on the MRSA "Staph Detection Plates" and advice on decontamination procedures please contact the Institute of Progressive Medicine by email at s3support@mail.com

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* Weber SG, et al. Legislative mandates for use of active surveillance cultures to screen for methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus and vancomycin-resistant enterococci: Position statement from the Joint SHEA and APIC Task Force. American Journal of Infection Control 35: 73-85, 2007.

About The Institute of Progressive Medicine

The Institute of Progressive Medicine is a non-profit public charity. Its faculty includes specialists in infectious diseases, especially as a cause of chronic illnesses.