

How Infection Prevention and Control Improves Patient Safety



Healthcare Infections Are “The Most Frequent Adverse Event”

Infection prevention and control is crucial to every healthcare organization to lower risks of Healthcare Associated Infections (HAI) for patients. In June 2020, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) announced that in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, [providers struggling to comply with infection control requirements](#) could face up to \$20,000 in penalties under increased enforcement efforts. As CMS Administrator Seema Verma stated, “We’re ratcheting up penalties with non-compliance to infection control...the fines are more significant for nursing homes with a history of past infection control deficiencies.”

The coronavirus pandemic put an increased focus on infection prevention and control to improve patient safety. **No one should acquire an infection while receiving health care**, yet, these infections can spread through outbreaks and care practices, affecting hundreds of millions of people across the world each year.

HAI’s Impact Patient Safety

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines [Healthcare Associated Infections \(HAI\)](#) as: “An infection occurring in a patient during the process of care in a hospital or other health-care facility which was not present or incubating at the time of admission. Health care-associated infections can also appear after discharge. They represent the most frequent adverse event associated with patient care.”

HAIs occur in all types of settings, including:

- Acute care hospitals
- Ambulatory surgery centers
- Dialysis facilities
- Pain clinics
- Outpatient care
- Long-term care facilities
- Non-healthcare settings



According to a [World Health Organization](#) report, the most common factors associated with HAI occurrence are:

- Persons age 65 and over
- Admitted to an emergency dept / ICU
- Hospital stay longer than seven days
- Placement of a catheter or tube
- Surgery
- Trauma-induced immunosuppression

While infections can happen to anyone, the

elderly population is extremely vulnerable to HAIs due to multiple risk factors for infectious diseases. The risk of acquiring HAI's is high in ICU's with approximately 30% of patients affected.



In Europe, each year HAIs cause 16 million extra hospital days, 37,000 deaths and nearly \$10 billion in added costs. To curb the spread, HAIs must be addressed and treated as a priority patient and facility safety issue, and each facility must have a comprehensive plan in place.

HAIs—Financial Cost and Human Toll

[Infection prevention and control](#) is an evidence-based approach which prevents patients and healthcare workers from being harmed by avoidable infection and antimicrobial resistance. Approximately [1 in 25 U.S. hospital patients](#) is diagnosed with at least one HAI each year related to hospital care and further infections occur in other healthcare settings. The CDC estimates that there are [nearly 100,000 deaths each year](#) in the U.S. attributed to HAIs. Many of these are due to drug-resistant pathogens, and [around 70% of HAIs](#) are resilient to at least one antibiotic. The financial impact of HAIs is significant, as [excess medical costs from HAIs](#) in the U.S. are up to \$33 billion annually.

Common types of HAIs include: multi-drug resistant bacterial infections such as Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), *Clostridioides difficile* (*C. difficile*), a deadly diarrheal infection, and sepsis, the body's extreme response to an infection. Sepsis is developed by over 1 million Americans each year. According to estimates, approximately 20% of global deaths are due to Sepsis.



Effective Infection Prevention and Control Improves Patient Safety

To stop HAIs before they occur, facilities need proper education and training so their healthcare workers increase compliance with and [adoption of best practices](#).

With an evidence-based Infection Prevention and Control Plan in place and workers in compliance, the CDC reports some initiatives have shown [sustained reductions of approximately 70%](#) in some types of HAI in hospitals.

Organizations may have a plan for reducing infections in a facility, but it can be challenging to maintain a highly reliable Infection Prevention Program given competing priorities. It's hard to accomplish

every top priority. We are here to help – not to lecture - as infection prevention is our only priority.



nodMD's Approach To Infection Prevention

nodMD was the first virtual practice for infectious disease physicians in the western United States and is now one of the top virtual practices for independent specialists in the U.S. ("n.o.d." is an abbreviation for "network of doctors"). Our new patients see a specialist **five times faster** than the national average, and our digital health platform is at the forefront of a transformation in healthcare as it accelerates access to specialists, collects healthcare data, facilitates HIPAA-compliant consults and reduces costs. nodMD's Infection Prevention and Control Program is directed by board-certified infectious disease physicians and offers leading-edge infection prevention. We assembled a team of infection prevention experts, led by our Director of Infection Prevention, Megan Crosser, who is board-certified in infection control. Additionally, we leverage technology to provide efficient and affordable services, so that facility leadership can focus more on their employees who impact patient care.

HAIs can cost a facility hundreds of thousands of dollars in reduced reimbursement and also create public relations damage to its brand. Preventing infections is critical to patient safety and to an organization's overall health and reputation.

For a **FREE, NO OBLIGATION** phone consultation with an IP professional, email yourfriends@nodMD.com or call (602) 551-8052

About nodMD

nodMD is the only digital health company focused exclusively on helping 250,000 independent specialists unleash the full potential of telemedicine for their practice by connecting with millions of patients needing specialist care. We increase access to independent specialist physicians via our digital health platform, which shortens patient wait times, improves health outcomes, lowers healthcare costs and offers referrals beyond traditional local geographic borders.

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