

Preventing MRSA: It's In Our Hands

The following message points will assist you with media questions and other community contacts pertaining to MRSA.

1. The Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association (AzHHA)'s leadership has identified Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) prevention as a key strategic priority.

Supporting Information:

- AzHHA and its member hospitals are actively promoting MRSA prevention to Arizona's healthcare professionals, business leaders, consumers and legislators.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reports that the main mode of MRSA transmission to others is through human hands. Therefore, proper hand washing for at least 15 seconds with friction using soap and warm water or alcohol-based waterless hand sanitizers, is critical. The AzHHA campaign focuses on hand washing with its theme: *Preventing MRSA: It's In Our Hands*.

2. AzHHA, as part of its Safe & Sound patient safety initiative, recommends antibiotic stewardship as an important step in preventing MRSA and keeping its incidence from growing.

Supporting Statistics:

- The CDC reports that MRSA and other significant infection-causing bacteria are becoming resistant to the most commonly prescribed antibiotic treatments.

- Factors contributing to antibiotic resistance are frequent exposure to antibiotics, not taking antibiotics as directed or taking antibiotics for a viral infection. Other ways to use antibiotics responsibly are to get them from the proper sources (not from other countries), use only your own prescription and to finish an entire prescribed course of antibiotics.
- Consumers may take an active role in antibiotic stewardship by recognizing that a physician may not prescribe antibiotics to treat conditions like a cold or flu, which typically do not require antibiotics.

3. AzHHA is the organizing entity for the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's 5 Million Lives Campaign in Arizona. This campaign includes a focus on reducing MRSA through changes in infection control processes throughout healthcare settings. Arizona hospitals have embraced the 5 Million Lives Campaign with nearly 85 percent of the state's inpatient beds participating in it.

Supporting Statistic:

- To reduce MRSA, the 5 Million Lives Campaign recommends: 1) improved hand hygiene among healthcare workers; 2) fastidious disinfection of the environment and equipment; 3) consideration for surveillance of high risk populations; 4) compliance with central venous catheter and ventilator best practices for infection control.

MESSAGE POINTS

- 4. When MRSA was first identified in the 1960s, it was mainly found in hospitals and nursing homes. Today, community-associated MRSA is one of the most common causes of skin infections. It is prevalent in homes, day care centers, gyms, schools and elsewhere in the community.**

Supporting Statistic:

- As reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), community-associated MRSA has become the most frequent cause of skin and soft tissue infections presenting to emergency departments in the United States.

- 5. Patients often bring infections into the hospital, therefore infection rates can be misleading and not indicative of a hospital's infection control measures. Three of four patients entering a healthcare facility with MRSA walked in with the bacteria, having acquired it either in the community or during a previous stay in a healthcare facility.**

Supporting Statistic:

- The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) has reported that 46 of every 1,000 healthcare facility patients in their 2007 study were infected or colonized with MRSA. Of those, 77 percent were identified within 48 hours of admission. This finding suggests that 35 of 46 patients walk into healthcare facilities with MRSA.

- 6. Although the incidence of MRSA is on the rise, it is treatable with less common forms of antibiotics.**

Supporting Statistics:

- According to CDC, in 1974, MRSA infections accounted for 2 percent of total staph infections; in 1995 that number rose to 22 percent and by 2004 it had jumped to 63 percent.
- MRSA is resistant to common antibiotics such as methicillin, oxacillin, penicillin and amoxicillin. It can, however, be treated with other classes of antibiotics. It is more difficult to manage than other types of staph infections.

