

Prevention and Control of Infections (PCI)

Overview

According to the World Health Organization, of every 100 patients in acute-care hospitals, 7 patients in high-income countries and 15 patients in low- and middle-income countries will acquire one or more health care-associated infection (HAI) during their hospital stay, and an average of 1 in every 10 affected patients will die from an HAI. Modern health care, despite its great strides in preventing and treating disease, has yet to eliminate the risk to patients of acquiring an infection in the very place where infection should be least present. However, multidrug-resistant infections can be acquired in almost any setting, including homes, schools, and vacant lots, making the need for effective infection prevention and control in hospitals even more important.

To help reduce the possibility of acquiring and transmitting an infection, hospitals need to establish a systematic infection prevention and control program. The design and scope of your organization's program are determined by the specific risks faced by location, the population(s) served, and the types of services hospitals provide. The infection prevention and control activities hospitals adopt should also be practical and reasonable to follow. After an effective program is in place, the hospital takes measures so that the program operates according to plan and is evaluated appropriately.

Everyone who has clinical contact with patients should wash their hands frequently to help prevent the spread of disease. However, effective infection prevention and control plans go well beyond this approach. A strong plan will have the input and support of hospital leaders and will stress communication and collaboration. Everyone involved in the daily operations of the hospital, from practitioners to receptionists to kitchen staff and dock workers, should play a role. For example, physical rehabilitation specialists should take precautions to prevent germs from passing among patients via medical equipment, or staff who receive patients at intake should take measures to prevent the spread of disease when paperwork is passed back and forth. Everyone should observe proper infection prevention and control techniques.

The processes outlined in the “Prevention and Control of Infections” (PCI) chapter are applicable to all infections and potential sources of infection that hospitals might encounter. The standards are designed to assist hospitals, both large and small, in developing and maintaining an effective program that covers a wide range of situations.

These standards address activities of planning, implementation, and evaluation and are based on the following conditions necessary to establish and operate an effective infection prevention and control program. Every hospital, regardless of its size or the services it provides, should do the following:

- Recognize that its infection prevention and control program plays a major role in its efforts to improve patient safety and quality of care.
- Demonstrate leaders' commitment to infection prevention and control by endorsing and participating in the organization's efforts to control infection, provide resources, and encourage improvement.
- See that staff collaborate with each other when designing and implementing the infection prevention and control program hospitalwide.
- Regularly assess its infection prevention and control program by using an epidemiological approach that consists of surveillance, data collection, analysis, and trend identification.

- Coordinate its program with the larger community, including regional or national public health organizations.
- Develop a hospitalwide prospective preparedness plan for an infectious disease outbreak that could overwhelm the hospital's resources.

Effective infection prevention and control programs have in common executive leader support, qualified department leaders, well-trained staff, methods to identify and to proactively address infection risks in persons and the environment, appropriate policies and procedures, staff education, and coordination throughout the organization.

Standards

The following is a list of all standards for this function. They are presented here for your convenience without their intent statements or measurable elements. For more information about these standards, please see the next section in this chapter, Standards, Intents, and Measurable Elements.

Responsibilities

- PCI.01.00** A qualified individual(s) guides the implementation of the hospital's infection prevention and control program and oversees the activities needed to carry out the program throughout the hospital.
- PCI.01.01** The hospital coordinates infection prevention and control activities across all departments and services.
- PCI.01.02** Hospital leaders provide resources to support the infection prevention and control program.

Goals of the Infection Prevention and Control Program

- PCI.02.00** The hospital uses a risk-based data-driven method to establish priorities, implement interventions, and monitor the effectiveness of the health care-associated infection prevention and control program.
- PCI.02.01** The laboratory implements a process to reduce the risks of infection resulting from exposure to infectious diseases and biohazardous materials and waste.

Medical Equipment, Devices, and Supplies

- PCI.03.00** The hospital reduces the risk of infections associated with medical/surgical equipment, devices, and supplies by proper cleaning, disinfection, sterilization, and storage.
- PCI.03.01** The hospital implements a process for managing the reuse of single-use devices in accordance with manufacturer's requirements and any applicable laws and regulations.
- PCI.03.02** The hospital implements a process for managing expired and damaged devices and supplies.

Environmental Cleanliness

- PCI.04.00** The infection prevention and control program provides oversight for the cleaning and disinfection of the environment.
- PCI.04.01** The infection prevention and control program follows evidence-based guidelines related to cleaning and disinfection of laundry, linens, and scrub attire provided by the hospital.

Infectious Human Tissues and Waste

- PCI.05.00** The hospital implements processes for proper disposal of waste, proper management of human tissues, and safe handling and disposal of sharps and needles.