



May 27, 2008

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Majority Office
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Waxman:

I am pleased to provide information to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform regarding the collaboration among Washington State hospitals to improve patient safety and reduce hospital acquired infections. Patient safety is our members' top priority, and we have dedicated considerable resources to helping Washington hospitals reach their goal of zero medical errors which affect patients' health.

Please find the answers to your questions below:

- 1. If known, what are the median and overall rates of central line-associated bloodstream infections in the intensive care units in hospitals in your state?*

In 2007, we worked with the Washington State Legislature to establish a system for hospital-specific reporting of infection rates, including central line infection rates in the Intensive Care Unit. The hospital infection reporting system is contained in House Bill 1106, enacted in 2007.

The first type of infection that must be reported to the Washington State Department of Health are central line infections. These reports will begin in June of 2008. From the new infection reporting system, we will have reliable data from hospitals across the state, reported to and monitored by a central government agency.

The department will create and publicize annual reports with hospital-specific infection rates beginning in January 2009. This information will be used to support the efforts underway since 2005 to implement the best medical evidence to reduce central line infections. This work is being done through the

Washington State Hospital Association's Safe Table on Eliminating Hospital Acquired Infections.

2. *If the rates are unknown or if the median rate is above zero, do you have plans to replicate the Michigan Hospital program in your state? If so, when do you anticipate initiating the program?*

Although we are working on infection prevention, to date we have not devoted the resources the Michigan Hospital Association has to controlling central line infections.

The Washington State Hospital Association currently offers our hospitals a program to help them reduce infections. Our "Safe Table Learning Collaboratives" meet on a monthly basis and provide a non-competitive environment for hospitals to learn best practices from national leaders and each other.

Safe Table topics have included preventing multi-drug resistant organisms such as MRSA and *Clostridium difficile*, and preventing infections from surgery, ventilators, central lines, and urinary catheters. Expert national researchers and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) share the latest medical evidence and strategies. Hospitals receive concrete, evidence-based tools for reducing hospital-acquired infections and other medical errors. Much of the work of the Safe Table program is based on the strong programs initiated through the Institute for Healthcare Improvement.

3. *What other activities are your member hospitals taking to address healthcare-associated infections? Which infections are you targeting? What is your evidence of success?*

Another focus for our Safe Table Collaborative meetings has been hand hygiene. Hand hygiene is identified by the CDC as one of the best ways to prevent hospital acquired infections. Forty-four hospitals are participating in the hand hygiene campaign. They are measuring monthly the amount of soap and sanitizer used in the hospital compared to a standard statistic (based on the average number of care providers for each patient per day with each provider washing or sanitizing their hands).

Washington is the first state in the nation to undertake this type of effort on a statewide basis. Compliance data are provided back to hospitals in aggregate and at unit levels on a monthly basis to spur improvement. The result has been a significant increase in providers correctly washing or sanitizing their hands each time they see a new patient. Compliance has increased in participating hospitals by 80 percent.

This program also promotes patient involvement by urging patients to ask their care providers if they have washed or sanitized their hands. Materials for patients were developed with input from focus groups of recent hospital patients. To date, the

Washington State Hospital Association has distributed more than 400,000 informational brochures to patients. The program also includes other materials to remind patients (as well as visitors and caregivers) about the importance of hand washing, including table tents for meal trays and bedside tables, stickers, and posters. Samples of these materials are enclosed.

In addition to infections, Washington hospitals have shown their commitment to reducing harm in many other areas. Washington was the first large state to have 100 percent commitment from hospitals to participate in the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's 100k and 5 Million Lives campaigns. Safe Tables and implementation of practices generated in these efforts have saved an additional 1,500 lives.

Thank you for your interest in the work Washington hospitals are doing. Please do not hesitate to contact myself (206/216-2500 or leog@wsha.org), or the vice president of our Patient Safety Program, Carol Wagner (206/275-0193 or carolw@wsha.org) for more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leo Greenawalt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L".

Leo Greenawalt
President and Chief Executive Officer
Washington State Hospital Association

Enclosures

Facts About Hand Hygiene...

- Hand hygiene helps to prevent the spread of infection to you, the patient.
- Germs that cause infections can be spread in a number of ways. The most common is through hands. Hand hygiene removes germs from the hands and helps protect YOU from infections.
- Health care workers can get their hands clean in two ways:
 - washing their hands with soap and water, or
 - sanitizing their hands by rubbing them with alcohol-based gel.



Washington State Hospital Association

In partnership with:

Northwest Organization of Nurse Executives

Service Employees International Union
(1199NW)

United Staff Nurses Union (UFCW 141)

University of Pennsylvania

Washington State Medical Association

Washington State Nurses Association

To order copies of this brochure or for more information visit:

<http://www.wsha.org/page.cfm?ID=bookstore>

or contact:

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(206) 216-2539 or angelas@wsa.org

03-01-06



Partners In Your CareSM

*Please ask:
“Did you wash
or sanitize
your hands?”*

Who?

Hospitals in Washington State strive to provide the best care to all patients. Now we need YOU to join our team as a partner in your care. So, ask your doctors, nurses, all your health care workers, and your visitors: “Did you wash or sanitize your hands?”

Why?

Hand hygiene is important to prevent the spread of infection to you, the patient.

Make your care safer. Ask your doctor, caregivers, and visitors to wash or sanitize their hands.

In our country, 2.5 million patients develop infections each year. This makes them much sicker and their recovery more difficult. Our goal is to keep you safe, and we need your help.

How?

Become a partner with your doctor, nurse, all the health care workers that enter your room, and your visitors by asking them, “Did you wash or sanitize your hands?”

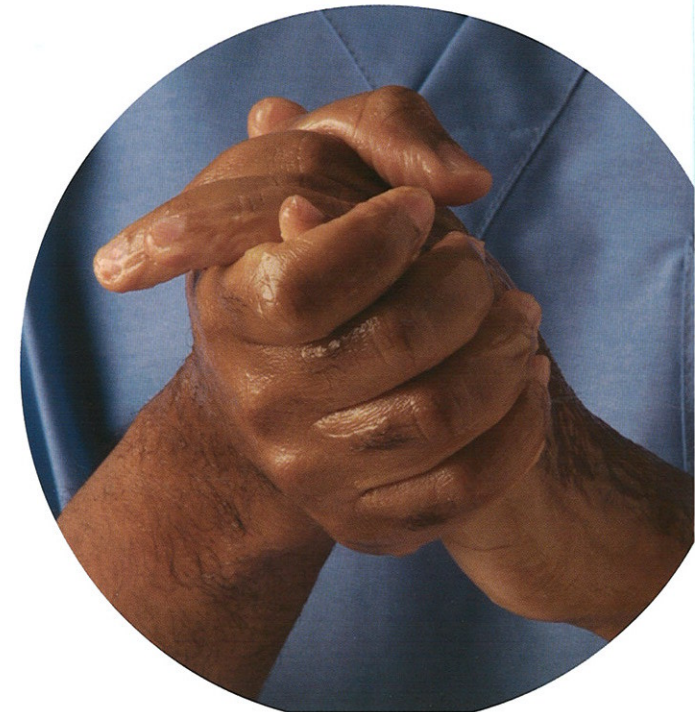
When and Where?

Ask the question any time your doctor, nurse, or health care worker is about to touch you or touch things that are used in your care. Ask about hand washing or sanitizing in your room or

anywhere else in the hospital where you are getting treatment.

Isn't It Rude to Ask?

No! Our health care workers are interested in your care and will expect you to ask them about hand hygiene! We want you to ask.



Facts About Hand Hygiene...

- Hand hygiene is very important in preventing the spread of infection to you and your patients.
- Germs that cause infections can be spread in a number of ways. The most common is through hands. Hand hygiene removes germs from the hands and helps protect your patients, YOU, and your family from infections.

Making a Difference...

- Washington hospitals are participating in a validated, proven hand hygiene program that has been implemented in over 300 hospitals in the U.S. and abroad.
- The program is recognized by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations and has been referenced in the Centers for Disease Control guidelines.



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Help
Yourself
and Your
Patients

IMPROVING PATIENT AND STAFF SAFETY



Staff Training Brochure

Partners In Your CareSM

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Hospitals in Washington State strive to provide the best care to all patients. Now we need YOU to join our team as a partner in your care. So, ask your doctors, nurses, all your health care workers, and your visitors: “Did you wash or sanitize your hands?”

Why?

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Make your care safer. Ask your doctor, caregivers, and visitors to wash or sanitize their hands.

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Become a partner with your doctor, nurse, all the health care workers that enter your room, and your visitors by asking them, “Did you wash or sanitize your hands?”

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Ask the question any time your doctor, nurse, or health care worker is about to touch you or touch things that are used in your care. Ask about hand washing or sanitizing in your room or

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Washington hospitals and doctors are committed to providing safe, efficient, and high quality care every day. Washington is one of only a few states where all our community hospitals are engaged in a national campaign to improve patient safety and quality. This commitment is just one way Washington hospitals and doctors are national leaders in patient safety and health care quality.

You can help, too. Patients and their families are important members of any care team. By actively participating in your own care, you can help your caregivers provide you with a safe and high-quality health care experience.



To order copies of this brochure or for more information, contact:



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or order online at:
www.wsma.org/patients/paceorder.html

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Ways You Can Help Improve Your Care

1. Ask questions if you have doubts or concerns.

- Choose a doctor you feel comfortable talking to.
- Write down your questions for your health care team so you don't forget them. Take notes when you meet with your doctor.
- Ask questions and make sure you understand the answers.
- If you think something is wrong, speak up. You have the right to ask about your own care.
- If you are hospitalized, know what the treatment will include, and how long the treatment should last.
- Tell your doctor and other members of your health care team about recent hospitalizations and care you're receiving.

2. Involve your loved ones.

- If possible, have a friend or family member with you to help ask questions and understand the answers. It's easy to be overwhelmed by the amount of information presented.

3. Know your medications and supplements.

- Give your doctor and pharmacist a list of all the medications you take, including non-prescription medications, vitamins, and herbal remedies.
- Read the label when you get your medication including all warnings.
- Ask about side effects and what to avoid while taking the medication.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if you have any drug allergies.
- Make sure your medication is what the doctor ordered and that you know what it's for and how to use it. Ask the pharmacist about your medication if it looks different than you expected.

4. Help prevent the spread of infection.

- Remind friends, family, and caregivers to wash/sanitize their hands before coming into direct contact with you. Cleaning hands is an important way to prevent the spread of infection.

- Discourage family or friends with an active cough from visiting you at the hospital or accompanying you on your doctor visits.

5. Understand what will happen if you need surgery.

- Ask your surgeon: Exactly what will you be doing? About how long will it take? What will happen after the surgery? How can I expect to feel during recovery?
- Make sure your surgeon has explained any potential complications.
- Tell the surgeon, anesthesiologist, and nurses about any allergies or bad reactions to anesthesia.
- Verify that the doctor or nurse has clearly marked the body part to be operated upon.

6. Know what to do after you are discharged from the hospital.

- Make sure you feel comfortable with discharge instructions given by your health care team.
- Review medications you are prescribed with your doctor or nurse, including the medications' names, dosage amounts, and how often you will be taking them.
- Ask your doctor or nurse to provide the phone number to call if you have questions following your discharge.



**Please ask: "Did you wash
or sanitize your hands?"**

**Por favor pregunte: "¿Se lavó
o desinfectó las manos?"**





*Ask me about
handwashing.*