

Hospital infections declining in Canada

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There is good news on the infection front: infections acquired by patients in Canadian hospitals are declining, with a 30% reduction between 2009 and 2017, according to new research in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*. However, continued focus is necessary to identify and prevent emerging antimicrobial-resistant pathogens, and infections with medical devices, such as urinary or intravenous catheters.

Health care-associated infections are a substantial issue worldwide. In the United States, an estimated 5% of patients admitted to hospital in 2002 developed an infection, resulting in 1.7 million infections and 98 000 deaths.

A series of studies, conducted by a team of researchers with the Canadian Nosocomial Infection Surveillance Program (CNISP), included data from hospitals from 9 Canadian provinces in 2002 and 2009, and all 10 provinces in 2017. The proportion of patients with a hospital-acquired infection increased from 9.9% in 2002 to 11.3% in 2009, and decreased to 7.9% in 2017, a 30% decline. Urinary tract infections (32%) were the most common infection, followed by pneumonia (23%), surgical site infection (20%), bloodstream

infection (15%) and *Clostridioides difficile* infection (9%). Infection rates in intensive care units declined 29%.

"There is no single reason for the overall decline in infection types, which suggests Canadian hospitals have used a variety of methods to prevent [infection](#), such as better hand washing, antimicrobial stewardship to prevent *C. difficile* and other measures," says Dr. Geoffrey Taylor, University of Alberta Hospital, Edmonton, Alberta.

In a [related commentary](#), Dr. Jennie Johnstone, Public Health Ontario and coauthors write, "[a]lthough these rates are low, there are some concerning trends. The proportion of health care-associated infections caused by antimicrobial-resistant organisms was stable or increasing for all pathogens, and carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae, which are emerging antimicrobial-resistant pathogens, were identified for the first time in the 2017 survey."

"Without ongoing efforts to improve and reduce [health care](#)-associated infections and antimicrobial resistance and without frequent measurement of our performance as a country, it is likely that the gains seen in this study will not be sustained and that Canada's antimicrobial resistance problem may become unmanageable," write the commentary authors.

More information: "Trends in health care-associated infections in acute care hospitals in Canada: an analysis of repeated point-prevalence surveys" is published September 9, 2019. www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.190361

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