



affiliate Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons  
member New York-Presbyterian Healthcare System  
A Planetree Hospital

April 18, 2014

Jewel Mullen, MD, MPH, MPA  
Commissioner  
Connecticut Department of Public Health  
410 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, Connecticut 06134-0308

Dear Dr. Mullen:

We support transparency of patient safety and quality information and patients' increased access to these data. As we take our infection prevention initiatives very seriously, and realize these data can be very complex, we appreciate the opportunity to provide context around the information posted in the Connecticut Department of Public Health Hospital Acquired Infections Report.

The data in the report includes a relatively high rate of colon surgery infections at Stamford Hospital in late 2012, which represented the first year that Connecticut collected this information. We do have a rigorous ongoing infection prevention and surveillance program, and were aware of this increase in our rates in late 2012.

We employ a number of preventive safety measures prior to all surgical procedures including sterile preparation and processes, team safety time outs, and appropriate and timely use of antibiotics. As a result, we have had nearly 100% compliance with these steps as reflected in Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services national Surgical Care Improvement Program (SCIP) quality measures.

Upon identifying the specific rise in infection rates in colon surgery procedures in late 2012, we put in place a number of additional efforts to reduce them. These included a review of the most recent evidence on infection prevention measures for colon surgery and sharing of best practices among surgeons. The team developed a dedicated checklist for all colon procedures that standardizes a number of added and dedicated steps to be taken before, during, and after these operations. As a result of these collective efforts, we have seen a nearly 70% decrease in colon surgery infection rates since the peak in late 2012 included in the CT DPH Hospital Acquired Infections Report.

Our Infection Prevention Program uses a number of advanced approaches in efforts to reduce and eliminate hospital acquired infections. These include intensive environmental cleaning, staff training programs, direct observation of hand hygiene, specialized and dedicated "bundles" for procedures, daily review of antibiotic use, unit and provider specific infection rate reporting, and employment of advanced technologies. As a result, we have observed an overall 50% decrease in the rate of hospital acquired infections over the past five years. A representative example is the nearly 40% reduction in the rates of Clostridium difficile colon infections rates we have achieved in the face of a national increase in these infections.

Details on these and other infection prevention, quality, and safety programs and results are available on our website, at <http://www.stamfordhospital.org/About-Us/Safety-Quality/Infection-Prevention.aspx>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rohit Bhalla'.

Rohit Bhalla, MD, MPH  
Vice President, Quality and Chief Quality Officer  
Stamford Hospital