



ASSOCIATION FOR PROFESSIONALS IN
INFECTION CONTROL AND EPIDEMIOLOGY, INC.

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July 15, 2005

Dear Editor,

The tragic number of healthcare-associated infections recently cited in Pennsylvania's PHC4 report (July 13, 2005) brings to the fore this crucial issue of patient safety.

PHC4's use of billing data to convey infection rates fails to recognize that one infection treated five times may result in five hospital bills, but it is still only one infection. The use of billing data to convey infections rates is misleading at best and is a cause of great concern to the 10,000-member Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC).

The effort to reduce infection rates to an irreducible level and thereby heighten patient safety has been APIC's goal for more than three decades. While not all healthcare-associated infections can be prevented, great potential exists for decreasing the overall number. APIC believes that when patients and healthcare professionals work together, infection rates can be reduced to their lowest possible level.

It is important to understand that *reporting* infection rates is not the same as *reducing* infection rates. For this very reason, APIC recently called for a national standard of collecting and analyzing infection rates in an effort to create a consistent scientifically sound system that allows hospitals to better monitor infections and patients to make decisions based on accurate data. Our patients deserve no less from their healthcare providers.

For years APIC has been working to draw public attention to the importance of infection prevention and control. Now that the level of awareness has been heightened it is important that this momentum not be lost.

Sincerely,

Sue Sebazco, RN, BS, CIC
L. Warye
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Kathy