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Bay Area hospital collaboration reduces hospital-acquired infections

East Bay Business Times - by Chris Rauber San Francisco Business Times

The Beacon Collaborative, a voluntary affiliation of 39 hospitals in five San Francisco Bay Area counties, said Monday that its members reduced the number of two major types of hospital infections dramatically between April 2006 and the end of last year, saving an estimated 194 lives in the process.

Hospitals participating in the voluntary effort are located in five Bay Area counties: Alameda, San Francisco, Marin, San Mateo and Santa Clara.

During the 21-month period, 34 of the 39 hospitals in the group prevented an estimated 60 percent of the cases of ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP) that otherwise would have been expected, and an estimated 66 percent of cases of central line-associated bloodstream infections (CL-BSI), two of the most common types of so-called hospital-acquired infections. Approximately 720 infections were likely prevented, saving an estimated 194 lives and nearly \$4 million in unnecessary hospital costs. (Five of the 39 hospitals did not submit specific data on ventilator-related infections, just on central line infections.)

According to the Walnut Creek-based collaborative, the Bay Area improvement rates were equal to or better than those achieved in ventilator cases by the National Healthcare Safety Network in 2006 and in central-line cases by Michigan's Keystone Center for Patient Safety & Quality, in a study reported late last year.

Nationally, VAP infections account for more than 35,000 deaths a year, at an average cost of nearly \$10,000 per infection, and CL-BSI cases result in as many as 21,000 deaths, at an average cost of more than \$36,000 per infection, according to **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** data cited by the Beacon group.

According to Beacon's analysis of the Bay Area improvements, the 120 lives saved by reducing ventilator-related infections saved an estimated \$1.2 million, and the 74 lives saved by reducing central line-related infections saved an estimated \$2.7 million.

"The Bay Area is becoming a national model of patient safety and Beacon has emerged as one of the primary resources and catalysts for hospitals committed to reducing VAP and CL-BSI infections, as well as other hospital related errors or conditions," said Dr. Bruce Spurlock, the group's executive director. He said the collaborative effort allows local hospitals to "learn from each other and adapt best practices, even though (they) often compete fiercely for market share within their communities."

Spurlock told the San Francisco Business Times that ongoing efforts to reduce sepsis-

related infections and hospital-acquired bed sores are also bearing fruit. "We think we can make a 25 percent reduction in mortality" from sepsis infections, he said, which could save hundreds or thousands of lives locally, and as many as 15,000 lives per year statewide.

In a year or two, "we could have even more remarkable results" to report, Spurlock added.

Beacon officials said participating hospitals also select from a number of other quality-improvement initiatives that involve tracking progress, comparing results against Beacon-wide averages and sharing the "evidence-based tools and techniques needed to reduce errors that often lead to injury or death." Results for individual hospitals are confidential and do not generally include enough cases for scientifically valid comparisons with aggregated collaborative results, Spurlock said.

The other areas Beacon focuses on include heart attacks, heart failure, avoiding medication errors, rapid response teams, surgical care improvement, preventing MRSA or "Super Bug" staph infections, preventing hospital-acquired bed sores (also known as pressure ulcers), stroke and sepsis. Most hospitals are working on six or more initiatives.

"Beacon is a vital forum for hospital professionals committed to patient safety, a concern that transcends the business of health-care and the natural competition that takes place between health systems," said Art Sponseller, president and CEO of the Hospital Council of Northern & Central California, which started what is now the Beacon effort in 2005.

Originally known as the Bay Area Patient Safety Collaborative, it was renamed Beacon Collaborative when the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation gave it nearly \$2 million in April 2007 for the second phase of its work. It started as a communications hub for hospitals participating in the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's "100,000 Lives Campaign," a national effort to improve quality and reduce the number of medical errors caused by hospitals and doctors.

Beacon also announced Monday a new \$6 million, three-year grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation to help it continue its quality improvement efforts at regional hospitals that treat more than 450,000 inpatients annually. The Moore funds goes toward Beacon support of individual hospitals that have committed to work on specific quality improvement projects.

"The Bay Area is emerging as a leader in high quality patient care, but there is still more to be done," Marybeth Sharpe, who leads the Moore Foundation's Betty Irene Moore Nursing Initiative, which funds Beacon's initiatives.

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