

## **Medicare Hospital Bloodstream Infection Data Goes Public**

Making hospital-acquired infection data accessible to the public does not merely increase transparency, but also encourages hospitals to take more steps to minimize errors. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has announced the release of bloodstream infection data to the public.

The agency has updated the Hospital Compare website to include data about the incidence of central line-associated bloodstream infections. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services believes that it can use the hospital bloodstream infection data to identify areas of improvement and develop specific and targeted infection prevention efforts.

Central line-associated bloodstream infections are some of the deadliest hospital-acquired infections. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that approximately 100,000 people are killed every year as a result of bloodstream infections. In 2009 alone, there were an estimated 41,000 bloodstream infections in hospital ICUs across the country. Approximately 25% of persons who contract a bloodstream infection will die. These infections add more than \$700 million to healthcare expenses annually.

Central lines are used to deliver drugs and nutrients to the patient at a much quicker speed. Unfortunately, infections can set in when the lines are contaminated or proper protocol for catheter changes are not followed. When an infection does occur, it can spread rapidly, because the central lines allow germs to be transmitted quickly into the bloodstream.

[Medical malpractice lawyers](#) believe that these infections are entirely preventable, and hospital intensive care units around the country have been able to reduce their central line-associated bloodstream infection rates by ensuring sure that medical professionals in the intensive care unit follow a simple checklist program.