

DRAFT Press Release

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25 July 2007

Health Protection Agency publishes latest MRSA and *Clostridium difficile* figures

Latest figures for MRSA, show there was a 6.4% fall in the number of cases reported to the Health Protection Agency from January – March 2007. There were 1,444 cases reported in England compared to 1,542 in the last quarter.

In January 2007, the Agency started publishing quarterly surveillance figures on Healthcare Associated Infection to help hospitals improve the responsiveness of their efforts to reduce infections.

These latest quarterly figures complete the full year's picture of MRSA bloodstream infections which have fallen by 10% over the course of the year. Between April 2006 – March 2007, 6,378 cases of MRSA were reported, compared to 7,096 for the previous year. The biggest falls have been seen in London which previously had the highest number of cases, and in acute teaching trusts.

Dr Georgia Duckworth, head of the Agency's Healthcare Associated Infection & Antimicrobial Resistance Department, said: "Certain hospitals have made great strides in bringing down their levels of MRSA, for example, by targeting interventions at risk areas and procedures, such as indwelling devices. As a result they have managed to achieve significant reductions in the number of infections.

"Today, we have also published some preliminary information from a more detailed MRSA surveillance scheme. The information shows that MRSA occurs more frequently in the elderly, with more than 77% of cases reported in those 60 years and over. This group may be particularly at risk from MRSA since many of them experience prolonged hospital stays in specialist units. "

The latest *Clostridium difficile* figures, also published today by the Health Protection Agency, show that there were 15,592 cases in patients aged 65 years and over in England reported in the first quarter of 2007. This represents a 2% rise when compared to the same period last year, January – March 2006, but is 22% higher than the previous quarter (12,814 cases were reported in October to December 2006); however higher numbers of vulnerable people are admitted to hospital during this time of year which may explain this recent rise.

Dr Christine McCartney, who leads the Agency's programme for Healthcare Associated Infections, said: "The Agency has been actively supporting and advising NHS Trusts to help them bring down their levels of healthcare associated infections, and the continuing fall in the numbers of MRSA cases is very encouraging. However there is still a lot of work to be done if we are to continue to achieve reductions in both MRSA and *C difficile*. Many of these infections are preventable if hygiene and antibiotic prescribing guidelines are strictly followed by Trusts."

Notes to Editors:

1. The HPA is now publishing mandatory surveillance data in a quarterly format, with an annual Healthcare Associated Infection report once a year. The next set of quarterly data will be published in October, and the next annual report will be published in October 2007.

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2. *Clostridium difficile* associated disease figures – a summary of cases reported under mandatory surveillance in those aged 65 and older in England. (The mandatory surveillance focuses on the over-65s as the majority of infections occur in this age group).

Annual Data:	No. of reports
January – December 2004	44,563
January – December 2005	51,829
January – December 2006	55,634

Quarterly Data:	No. of reports
January – March 2006	15,342
April – June 2006	14,681
July – September 2006	12,814
October – December 2006	12,797
January – March 2007	15,592

Reports of *Clostridium difficile* infection for individual Trusts are available at http://www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics_az/hai/Mandatory_Results.htm

3. MRSA figures – a summary of cases reported under mandatory surveillance in England

Date	No. of reports
April – September 2001	3,620
October 2001 – March 2002	3,671
April – September 2002	3,612
October 2002 – March 2003	3,814
April – September 2003	3,745
October 2003 – March 2004	3,955
April – September 2004	3,548
October 2004 – March 2005	3,685
April – September 2005	3,570
October 2005 – March 2006	3,526
April – September 2006	3,392
October 2006 – March 2007	2,986

Please note the new figures break down as follows:	
April – June 2006	1,742
July – September 2006	1,650
October 2006 – December 2006	1,542
January 2007 – March 2007	1,444

Reports of MRSA bloodstream infections for individual Trusts are available at http://www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics_az/hai/Mandatory_Results.htm

4. Data from the third year of the mandatory surveillance of Glycopeptide Resistant Enterococcal (GRE) is also published today which shows that there were 903 reported cases between October 2005 – September 2006. Overall numbers are relatively small – only 20 Trusts reported more than 10 cases, most of these being in acute teaching Trusts. These infections tend to be associated with highly specialist care, for instance in critical care and renal units. The data presented are based on reports of clinically significant GRE in English NHS acute Trusts. Data are collected quarterly from each of the participating acute NHS trusts in England by the Health Protection Agency.

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The table includes annual counts of GRE as follows:

- October 2003 to September 2004 (628)
- October 2004 to September 2005 (758)
- October 2005 to September 2006 (903)

5. For further information please contact the press office on 0208 327 6690/6055/7097/7098/6647.