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**Patient safety**

Research study update: Study off to a great start thanks to participating nursing homes
Recruitment for a new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study — Implementing standardized measurement of infections in nursing homes: challenges and facilitators — occurred in December. As reported in the last issue of In Touch, the study will identify challenges and facilitators to implementing standardized measurement of *Clostridium difficile* (*C. difficile*) and other multidrug-resistant organisms (MDROs) in participating nursing homes.

When the process began, The Joint Commission’s goal was to recruit approximately 25 nursing homes.

“We had 39 nursing homes enroll in the study,” said Beth Ann Longo, DrPH, MSN, MBA, RN, NHA associate project director in the department of health services research at The Joint Commission. “We have 14 states represented — from New York to California.”

Longo said the CDC was excited about the number of nursing homes participating in the study.

“The CDC participated in our kick-off webinar to personally welcome study participants and to convey the importance of the study and how it fits with the bigger picture of the CDC’s Antibiotic Resistance Solutions Initiative,” Longo said.

The purpose of the research study is to facilitate the participating nursing homes’ enrollment into the National Healthcare Safety Network — the most widely used health care-associated infection tracking system and the mechanism by which standardization occurs, according to Longo.

Standardized measurement of infections is paramount to improving health care, enhancing patient safety, and reducing morbidity and mortality.
“There is tremendous value in being part of a national measurement system for infections,” Longo said. “By participating in this study, these nursing homes are showing they care about quality, which translates to better outcomes for their residents and facility. Their participation further demonstrates their commitment to advancing the science of quality improvement.”

The Joint Commission’s study team is providing training, facilitating monthly coaching calls, giving step-by-step guidance through the NHSN enrollment process, and has created real-time support systems for study participants (a dedicated phone line and email address).

Participating organizations are expected to complete their training and enroll in NHSN, as well as share their experiences with NHSN enrollment and reporting.

Longo said there is plenty to learn by the time the study ends this September.

“We want to explore whether certain organizational and individual characteristics affect the ability to successfully implement quality improvement initiatives,” Longo said. “We also want to identify both challenges and facilitators to NHSN implementation, as well as to analyze these factors relative to organizational characteristics.”

Study results will inform policymakers of the readiness of nursing homes to implement standardized measurement of infections nationally.

**Resources**

**Reduce readmissions by using TST® for Hand-off Communications**
Many hospitals are forming select networks of skilled nursing facilities to send their patients to in an effort to reduce potential patient readmissions. The Joint Commission Center for Transforming Healthcare’s [Targeted Solutions Tool® for Hand-off Communications](https://www.jointcommission.org) can help nursing homes distinguish themselves from the pack by providing a framework for communication with hospitals.

This comes during a time in which hospitals are facing financial penalties for patients readmitted in a certain time frame after being discharged.

“Hospitals are looking at ways of trying to partner with nursing homes that are high quality in order to put together processes that will enhance the transition of the patient from hospital to the nursing home so that they don’t return to the hospital,” said Kimberly Clawson, MHSA, associate director of business development in the Nursing Care Center Accreditation program at The Joint Commission. “One of the main areas of great focus is communication. How do the hospital and nursing home communicate with each other to really reduce that incidence of readmission?”

Clawson said it is in the nursing homes’ best interest to improve upon this communication process.

“This handoff communication tool provides a framework for what that communication should look like,” Clawson said.

The TST® helps organizations:
- Facilitate examination of their current hand-off communication process
- Determine a measurement system that produces data to support the need for improving the current processes
- Identify areas of focus
- Provide customizable forms for data collection
- Give guidelines for hand-off communication processes
By using the TST®, one health care organization reported it reduced readmissions by 50 percent. Clawson said Joint Commission-accredited organizations have this tool available to them in their Joint Commission Connect™ extranet portal, free of charge, as an added benefit of their accreditation.

Join the conversation by reading Joint Commission blogs
Keep up with current trends in nursing homes by checking out these recent blog posts:

- **On Infection Prevention & Control – Is it Time for an Oral Care Plan Checkup?** Trina Crowe, RN, MJ, associate project director in the department of standards and survey methods, describes how proper oral care can potentially realize cost savings in nursing homes. Actively carrying out an oral care plan will help residents preserve their teeth and maintain healthy habits.

- **Quality in Nursing Center Care – Strong Communication Practices Smoothed the Path for Nation’s First Memory Care Certification:** Gina Zimmermann, MS, executive director of the Nursing Care Center Accreditation program, writes about how Chaparral House, a 49-bed skilled nursing facility in Berkeley, California, obtained the first Post-Acute and Memory Care certifications in the U.S.

Don’t miss these upcoming complimentary webinars
Learn more about industry hot topics, accreditation and specialty certification options for nursing homes at one of the Joint Commission’s free upcoming webinars:

- **Top 10 Reasons Your Nursing Home Should Pursue Certification** — March 29 — The Joint Commission offers specialty certifications in the areas of post-acute care, memory care, integrated care and disease-specific care. Learn how these certifications can benefit an organization.

- **Hot Topic Session: The Top 5 Things to Know About the Revised CMS Regulations for Nursing Homes** — April 18 — Joint Commission staff will explain the changes to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ regulations for nursing homes. Speakers are:
  - Kimberly Clawson, associate director of business development
  - Trina Crow, RN, MJ, associate project director specialist in the Nursing Care Centers program

- **Resolve your health care quality and safety problems with the Targeted Solutions Tool® (TST®)** — May 11 — Developed by the Joint Commission Center for Transforming Healthcare, the TST® is a unique online application that helps Joint Commission-accredited organizations solve some of the most persistent problems in health care quality and safety. Kelly Barnes, MS, the Center’s project lead, will speak about the TSTs during the webinar.