Surveyors Stop Scoring for Failure to Measure Surgical Site Infection Rates Past 30 Days

Suspension Aligns with Recent CDC Revisions

The Joint Commission recently announced that its surveyors have stopped citing organizations that are not currently in compliance with an element of performance (EP) of National Patient Safety Goal NPSG.07.05.01 on surgical site infection prevention. NPSG.07.05.01, EP 5, currently requires hospitals, critical access hospitals, ambulatory care organizations, and office-based surgery practices to do the following:

Measure surgical site infection rates for the first 30 days following procedures that do not involve inserting implantable devices and for the first year following procedures involving implantable devices. The hospital’s measurement strategies follow evidence-based guidelines.

Note: Surveillance may be targeted to certain procedures based on the hospital’s risk assessment.

The Joint Commission still requires organizations to measure surgical site infection rates for the first 30 days following procedures that do not involve inserting implantable devices. However, it will no longer require organizations to measure surgical site infection rates for the first year following procedures involving implantable devices. This change is effective immediately.

This moratorium was put in place because the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently revised its long-standing requirement for organizations to conduct surgical site infection surveillance for one year after a device is surgically implanted in a patient. Rather than one year of surveillance for all procedures in which devices/materials have been implanted during a surgery, the CDC now requires surveillance for 90 days after specific National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) operative procedures.*

In April, The Joint Commission’s Standards and Survey Procedures Committee began considering revising the language of NPSG.07.05.01, EP 5, to bring it into alignment with the CDC’s revision. Analysis of the CDC’s NHSN surgical site infection data revealed that the majority (greater than 85% for most procedure types) of surgical site infections are detected within either 30 or 90 days post-procedure, depending on the type of surgery. Furthermore, the 30-day surveillance period limit being used for most surgical procedures is consistent with current federal reporting mandates.

A future issue of Perspectives will include information on The Joint Commission’s final decision about this proposed revision. Questions about NPSG.07.05.01, EP 5, can be directed to Kelly Podgorny, DNP, CPHQ, RN, project director in the Department of Standards and Survey Methods, at kpodgorny@jointcommission.org, or to The Joint Commission’s Standards Interpretation Group through its online question form at http://www.jointcommission.org/Standards/.