

QIOs Target Surgical Infections

Quality Improvement Organizations are working with hospitals in every state to reduce the incidence of surgical site infections. The Surgical Infection Prevention (SIP) project – a national QIO effort that began in late 2002 – is sponsored by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Improving the selection and timing of administration of prophylactic antibiotics are major goals of the national project. An estimated 2.6 percent of nearly 30 million operations are complicated by surgical site infections each year, causing a significant amount of patient injury, mortality and often avoid-

**For more information
on the SIP project:
www.medqic.org/sip**

able costs for both patients and hospitals. Research studies show that one-third to one-half of these infections can be avoided with appropriate use of prophylactic antibiotics.

The SIP project focuses on improving hospital procedures known to have an impact on reducing surgical infections. Specifically, the project seeks to increase:

- The proportion of patients who receive antibiotics within one hour before incision.
- The proportion of patients who receive prophylactic antibiotics consistent with current recommendations.
- The proportion of patients whose prophylactic antibiotics are discontinued within 24 hours of surgery end time. This is an effort to limit resistance to antibiotic treatment.

The effort focuses on surgical procedures among the Medicare population, including: coronary artery bypass graft (CABG), cardiac surgery, colon surgery, hip and knee arthroplasty, abdominal and vaginal hysterectomy, and selected vascular procedures, such as vein bypass and repair of aneurysm.

Most QIOs have been working to reduce surgical infections by using an innovative collaborative model, pioneered by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, to effectively change clinical care processes in hospitals. QIOs were trained in the use of these IHI-style collaboratives in a national pilot project conducted by Qualis Health, a Seattle-based QIO, during 2002-2003.

The SIP Project is administered by the *Oklahoma Foundation for Medical Quality*, the QIO for Oklahoma, and advised by a panel of experts from more than a dozen national organizations, including: the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, American College of Surgeons, American Hospital Association, JCAHO, VHA, Surgical Infections Society, Association of periOperative Registered Nurses, Society of Thoracic Surgeons, and the American Society of Anesthesiologists.

The American Health Quality Association is dedicated to improving the safety and effectiveness of health care. AHQA represents the national network of Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs) that work with hospitals, medical practices, health plans, long-term care facilities, home health agencies, and employers to encourage the spread of best clinical practices and improve systems of care delivery.