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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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May 6, 2008

Mr. Craig A. Becker  
President  
Tennessee Hospital Association  
500 Interstate Boulevard, South  
Nashville, TN 37210

Dear Mr. Becker:

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform has begun an investigation into healthcare-associated infections (HAI), an epidemic that causes an estimated 100,000 deaths each year in the United States. I am writing to request your assistance to help address this epidemic and to learn more about the efforts state hospital associations are taking in this effort.

At an April 16, 2008, hearing on this subject, the Committee heard testimony about the successful initiative by the Michigan Hospital Association that has been recognized in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.<sup>1</sup> Under this project, the average hospital in the state has virtually eliminated one form of HAI known as a central-line-associated bloodstream infection (CLABSI). Overall, the rate of such infections fell by 66% between March 2004 and September 2005.<sup>2</sup> According to Dr. Peter Pronovost of Johns Hopkins University, the architect of the project, this effort saved approximately 1,800 lives and \$180 million.

At the hearing the Committee also released a report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) that focused on the efforts by the Department of Health and Human Services to reduce healthcare-associated infections. According to GAO, without stronger leadership, the

<sup>1</sup> Pronovost et al, *An Intervention to Decrease Catheter-Related Bloodstream Infections in the ICU*, New England Journal of Medicine (Dec. 28, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Pronovost et al, *An Intervention to Decrease Catheter-Related Bloodstream Infections in the ICU*, New England Journal of Medicine (Dec. 28, 2006).

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department "is unlikely to be able to effectively leverage its various methods to have a significant effect on the suffering and death caused by HAIs."<sup>3</sup>

The Michigan Hospital Association program indicates that even in the absence of federal leadership, efforts by state hospital associations can lead to a reduction in health care spending and lives saved. The infrastructure and successful collaborations created by such an effort can be helpful in any national effort to address HAIs.

I respectfully request that you provide the Committee with the following information:

1. If known, what are the median and overall rates of central line-associated bloodstream infections in the intensive care units in hospitals in your state, using standard definitions of CLABSIs as provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and prevention for the purpose of the National Healthcare Safety Network?<sup>4</sup>
2. If the rates are unknown or if the median rate is above zero, do you have plans to replicate the Michigan Hospital Association program in your state? If so, when do you anticipate initiating the program?
3. What other activities are your member hospitals taking to address healthcare-associated infections? Which infections are you targeting? What is your evidence of success?

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee in the House of Representatives and has broad oversight jurisdiction as set forth in House Rule X. An attachment to this letter provides additional information on how to respond to the Committee's request.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Health-Care-Associated Infections in Hospitals: Leadership Needed from HHS to Prioritize Prevention Activities and Improve Data on these Infections*, 40 (March, 2008) (GAO-08-283).

<sup>4</sup> CDC, *National Healthcare Safety Network Manual Patient Safety Component Protocol*, 6 (Jan. 2008) (online at: [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/pdf/nhsn/NHSN\\_Manual\\_PatientSafetyProtocol\\_CURRENT.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/pdf/nhsn/NHSN_Manual_PatientSafetyProtocol_CURRENT.pdf)).

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Please respond to this request by May 30, 2008. Please send a copy of your response to the majority office at 2157 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515 and a copy to the minority office at B350A Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515. Please also submit a response via email to Sarah.Despres@mail.house.gov. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Stephen Cha or Sarah Despres of the Committee staff at (202) 225-5056. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry A. Waxman".

Henry A. Waxman  
Chairman

cc: Tom Davis  
Ranking Minority Member