Overview of Infection Prevention and Control

Executive Summary

The estimated number of infections occurring in U.S. nursing homes annually ranges from 1.4 to 5.2 infections per 1,000 resident-days, or 765,000 to 2.8 million infections overall. However, because of the increasing complexity of care, these numbers may underestimate the actual incidence of infections in these settings. (U.S. HHS)

Infections in long-term care residents are associated with morbidity and mortality, hospital admissions and emergency department visits, antimicrobial use, and related costs. Outbreaks often impose significant financial and operational burden because of the difficulty in managing infected residents, staff sick leave and overtime, use of additional supplies, cleaning expenses, and lost revenue due to temporary closures. To provide high quality, safe, effective care and improve operational and financial efficiency, organizations must take steps to prevent and control infections and outbreaks. The continuing emergence of multidrug-resistant organisms (MDROs) and new pathogens underscores the importance of having a robust infection control program.

This guidance article provides an overview of infection control and prevention. It reviews the basic epidemiology of infections in this setting; laws, regulations, standards, and guidelines; and essential elements of an infection control program.

Action Recommendations

─ Create an infection prevention and control program, assign responsibility, and conduct periodic assessments.
─ Maintain a clean environment and equipment.
─ Address infection prevention and control issues through the employee health program.
─ Train and educate staff regarding infection prevention and control.
─ Educate residents, families, and visitors regarding infection prevention and control issues that are relevant to them.
─ Monitor compliance with standard and transmission-based precautions.
─ Optimize care to reduce residents’ susceptibility to infections.
─ Recognize infections promptly, and treat them effectively.
─ Perform surveillance to identify infections and infection risks, and act on the findings if necessary.
─ Use general and intensified measures to address MDROs.
─ Implement an antimicrobial stewardship program.
─ Develop procedures for identifying and responding to outbreaks.

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