



**Statement by the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
in response to
Consumer Reports Hospital Infection Rates Report and Database**

The report released by Consumer Reports on infection rates in healthcare facilities highlights the importance of transparent public reporting to engaging patients in the healthcare process and aiding their healthcare decisions. The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) supports public reporting as part of a comprehensive strategy to eliminate healthcare-associated infections (HAIs). Such data should stimulate immediate and sustained action by healthcare facilities to improve adherence to evidence-based prevention practices – the basis for checklists, innovative prevention programs, and other strategies – that can yield measurable improvements and indeed, elimination of HAIs.

As leaders in the field of infection prevention and control, SHEA members are deeply committed to the need for establishing a national standard of reporting for HAIs. In 2006, SHEA, the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), and the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) jointly published model legislation and a toolkit outlining recommendations for design of public reporting programs at the state level (www.shea-online.org/policy). These recommendations focused on creating standardized definitions of healthcare associated infections, ensuring validated data and supporting the use of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Health Safety Network as a backbone for surveillance and public reporting.

We are pleased that nearly half of the states have adopted laws similar to this model. However, SHEA believes it is time for a national standard that can ensure validated data and comparisons that accurately portray infection rates across geographic and health status-based risk categories. Such attention must be paid to ensure that patients and healthcare facilities have comparable information and that the focus remains on continuous improvement at each facility. A national standard will give all of us involved in the delivery of patient care – including the patient themselves – data for action that drives our progress toward elimination of HAIs.

Ultimately, a crucial byproduct of public reporting is patient and family engagement. SHEA is dedicated to translating evidence into useful information and tools that help patients and their families make decisions before, during, and after care in a healthcare facility. Since 2008, SHEA has made available **free** information resources for patients and families derived from evidence-based guidelines for preventing HAIs. These patient guides provide information on six types of HAIs and identify important practices that they should expect from their providers, important questions that patients and families should ask during their care, and steps that patients and their families can take

to prevent infections during care in the healthcare facility and at home. These guides are endorsed by the major organizations dedicated to patient safety, and to the elimination of HAIs including SHEA, IDSA, APIC, the CDC, the American Hospital Association, and the Joint Commission. They are widely used by nurses, patient educators and others in healthcare facilities across the nation to empower patients and families. These resources can be found at: www.preventinghais.com OR www.shea-online.org/about/patientguides.cfm

The focus on public transparency can lead to a culture of accountability, continuous healthcare quality improvement, and patient engagement. Combined with the dedicated efforts of thousands of healthcare workers to implement evidence-based practice, and with the power of science to guide all of those efforts true progress toward elimination of HAIs can be realized.