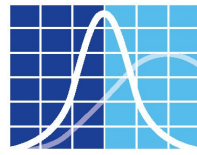




APIC

Spreading knowledge.
Preventing infection.®



SHEA
The Society for Healthcare
Epidemiology of America

July 16, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pence
The White House
Office of the Vice President
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Deborah Birx, MD
The White House
Coronavirus Task Force Response Coordinator
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Vice President Pence, Ambassador Birx, and Secretary Azar:

The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) and the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) representing the nation's infection preventionists and epidemiologists urge the Administration to continue working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and their established data collection efforts to combat COVID-19. We have been working with CDC for decades to create a widely trusted system, the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN), for the reporting of infection data in hospitals. For decades, this data source has been utilized by state, local, and federal governments, communities and hospitals to drive improvement of healthcare outcomes and to reduce infection rates in hospitals.

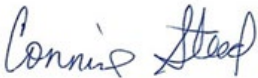
Since the beginning of the pandemic, reporting requirements have constantly shifted, frequently requiring hospitals to change and collect new data. This has been a huge burden on healthcare facilities that are already overwhelmed with the pandemic response. Now at a time when there are increases in infections of COVID-19 and with only two days' notice, the system for collecting data is upending the infection reporting process for COVID-19 and asking those who are stewards of the data to shift to an unknown mechanism and without support from the scientific community. This change further burdens healthcare personnel who are working around the clock to keep their hospitals and communities safe from COVID-19.

In addition, this overnight shift creates a lack of trust in the data integrity after it has been collected from healthcare facilities at a time when we need that trust more than ever. Abruptly changing the data collection requirements and methodology in the middle of the pandemic will impact the quality of critical public health data that we rely upon to drive our response and policies in our community. Further, there is concern that those responsible for analysis and interpretation of the data collected in HHS Protect will not have adequate training in epidemiology.

Finally, there are numerous existing reporting requirements at the state level. To meet state mandates, some facilities will need to input data into their state system as well as this new system, creating an unnecessary burden among personnel important to the broader pandemic response. Failure to input that data into state systems that use the NHSN would render the data unhelpful for comparison purposes and could impact consumer transparency. It will also deny infection preventionists and epidemiologists the consistent data needed to plan our response for future pandemics.

The nation needs a stable and reliable system with a known track record for maintaining data integrity, not a massive new bureaucratic effort without the support of experts in the healthcare community. We hope you will reconsider this disruptive mid-course change in data collection and allow hospitals the option to continue reporting COVID-19 data in NHSN to ensure the availability of reliable and transparent data that has the confidence of the scientific community and the public.

Sincerely,



Connie Steed, MSN, RN, CIC, FAPIC
2020 APIC President



Hilary Babcock, MD, MPH, FISDA, FSHEA
Past SHEA President

About APIC: APIC's mission is dedicated to creating a safer world through prevention of infection. The association's nearly 16,000 members direct and maintain infection prevention programs that prevent suffering, save lives and contribute to cost savings for hospitals and other healthcare facilities. APIC advances its mission through patient safety, implementation science, competencies and certification, advocacy, and data standardization. Visit APIC online at www.apic.org. Follow APIC on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/apic> and Facebook: www.facebook.com/APICInfectionPreventionandYou. For information on what patients and families can do, visit APIC's Infection Prevention and You website at www.apic.org/infectionpreventionandyou.

About SHEA: SHEA is a professional society representing more than 2,000 physicians and other healthcare professionals globally that have expertise in and passion for healthcare epidemiology, infection prevention, and antibiotic stewardship. SHEA's mission is to prevent and control healthcare-associated infections and advance the field of healthcare epidemiology and promote strong antibiotic stewardship programs. The society promotes science and research, develops expert guidelines and guidance for healthcare workers, provides high-quality education, encourages transparency in public reporting related to HAIs, works to ensure a safe healthcare environment, and facilitates the exchange of knowledge in all healthcare settings. SHEA upholds the value and critical contributions of healthcare epidemiology to improving patient care and healthcare worker safety. Visit SHEA online at www.shea-online.org, www.facebook.com/SHEApreventingHAIs and [@SHEA_Epi](https://twitter.com/SHEA_Epi).