

100,000 Lives Lost Each Year Due to Dirty Hospitals and Nursing Homes

By Catherine Bertram

05-16-2011

Each year 100,000 patients in hospitals and nursing homes in this country die from infection they acquired after being in a health care facility. This is the most common complication of hospital care and also one of the deadliest risks for patients according to [government officials](#).

In addition the loss of lives, the cost for our health care system is enormous. The estimated annual cost for hospital acquired infections is between \$28 and \$33 billion.

What is even more shocking and tragic is that the consensus in the US medical community is that most of these infections are preventable. How you ask? This is really where it should make us all angry - by washing your hands in between patients. It is not expensive or dangerous to implement. What will it take to make hospitals and nursing homes clean up their act? Unfortunately, it has to hit them where it hurts - in their pocket book. In 2008, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid ([CMS](#)) began denying payments to hospitals for the costs of patient's care and patient days related to these infections.

If you want more information about hospital acquired infections you can look at the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) website which provides links to infection prevention materials, statistics on infection rates and other materials.

About the author:

Catherine Bertram is board certified in civil trials and was recently nominated again as a 2011 Best Lawyer in DC for Malpractice and a 2011 Super Lawyer for Washington, D.C. Ms. Bertram has over 20 years of trial experience and is unique in that she was formerly the Director of Risk Management for Georgetown University Hospital. Ms. Bertram is a member of the bar for the U.S. Supreme Court. She is a partner with the firm and lectures regularly to lawyers and health care providers, nationally and locally, regarding patient safety, medical negligence and other related issues. She has also recently published a chapter in a surgical textbook. She can be reached by email at cbertram@reganfirm.com or by phone 202-822-1875 in her office in Washington, D.C