

5 simple steps hospitals could, but often do not, use to prevent bloodstream infections

By Catherine D. Bertram – 7/20/2010

Catheter-related bloodstream infections [kill 30,000 hospital patients and infect a total of 80,00 patients in the U.S. each year.](#) So why aren't more hospitals adopting the simple five-step approach to prevent these infections?

The protocol:

1. Health care provider washes hands
2. Patient's skin cleaned with antiseptic
3. Patient's body covered with sterile drape
4. Health care provider wears sterile hat, mask, gloves, and gown
5. Sterile dressing over the catheter site

When [Michigan hospitals implemented these steps,](#) their infection rate dropped by two-thirds. Over 18 months, the hospitals not only saved lives, but saved \$200 million, or about \$30,000 per infection.

So why not take those steps? A [survey](#) by the [Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology](#) indicates that the hospitals contend they don't have enough time to train or they blame it on unwieldy paper-based records systems. It is reported that many hospital CEO's aren't even aware of their own hospital's bloodstream-infection rates.

Do you know what the infection rates are at our local hospitals? Are you curious to find out which hospital has the lowest infection rates? I am too. Unfortunately, local hospitals are not required to publish this type of data even though patients and doctors would be interested and need to know.