



[Health Care Quality](#) 12 Mar 2009 07:56 am

National MRSA Reporting Bill Mirrors Legislative Effort in MA

Last week, Consumers Union brought leading health care quality advocates, including a HCFA staff person, to Washington, DC for a Patient Safety Summit. This event took place just before National Patient Safety Awareness Week. During the summit, attendees lobbied their elected officials on Capitol Hill about a new bill aimed at decreasing hospital-acquired infections. The bill, soon to be filed by Senator Menendez (D-NJ) and Congresswoman Jackie Speier (D-CA), will require public reporting and encourage screening for Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA), a bacterium found on the skin that can cause death. A staffer from Congresswoman Speier's office spoke to the group about the bill. Also, John McDonough, former E.D. of HCFA and now with the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, spoke about national health care reform and how quality must be part of the health care reform movement. He encouraged consumers to continue to be actively engaged.

In the most recent session of the MA legislature, HCFA, in partnership with the Consumer Health Quality Council, successfully advocated for legislation requiring hospitals to publicly report rates of infections in order to promote transparency and improve the quality of care delivered. This year, HCFA and the Consumer Council are supporting a bill filed by Representative Denise Provost (D-Somerville) requiring healthcare facilities to screen patients for MRSA and take precautions for those who test positive. Based on the CU summit, it is clear that Massachusetts is not alone in seeking to address these issues.

One of the Summit attendees, Alicia Cole, a survivor of a flesh-eating infection she contracted at a hospital, was recently featured on Fox News talking about her experiences. The story also highlighted the work of the Pacific Hospital of Long Beach to reduce infections. They have seen the work pay off as infection rates at the facility have dropped significantly.

As we observe Patient Safety Awareness Week, we encourage consumers to become involved in advocacy to prevent and reduce infections in Massachusetts and nationally. For more information about opportunities for consumer advocacy in Massachusetts, contact Kuong Ly at HCFA, kly@hcfama.org or 617-275-2940.

Kuong Ly