

Judy Consumer Is Fighting Mad About the 'CDC Truth Gaps'? And She's Not Going to Take It Anymore! **Judy says, “Rely on RID to Fight Hospital Infections.”**

By: **Judy Shapiro**
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Our friend, the generic "Judy Consumer" is fighting mad at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Hospital infections -- a highly preventable hygiene issue -- goes largely under the radar because the CDC understates the scope and deadliness of this health concern.

Judy Consumer gets incensed when she learns that simple education programs and processes have been proven to reduce infections by 70 percent or more, here and abroad. More than that, once she realizes these benefits can be achieved without expensive drugs or unproven technology and will actually reduce costs within the health care system, she starts getting burning mad that it gets scant attention from the CDC.

Just when she thought she couldn't get any angrier, "Judy Consumer" gets totally furious when she comes to fully understand how the CDC's "truth gaps" have actually hindered people's ability to protect themselves. Too many of us know a loved one or friend go in for treatment, like knee surgery, only to be made far more ill from infections. It has become so commonplace today, that it seems an inevitable part of the hospital experience. It need not be and we can turn our anger into positive change (but I'll get to that in a bit).

Let's first understand these "truth gaps" together so we'll be effective at combating them. And if you weren't angry till now, get ready -- you're about to become outraged. The information I am about to share is from a not-for-profit organization called RID (Reduce infection deaths) started by Betsy McCaughey, former Lt Governor of New York State. This advocacy group works with health agencies, hospitals and "Judy Consumer" to prevent infection in hospitals through better training. Her organization is working hard to get governments, health care professionals and "Judy Consumers" activated. With information, we can conquer this.

Here we go:

CDC Truth Gap #1: Hospital infection prevention and oversight is adequate

Here's a sad fact - our restaurants are held to stricter sanitation standards and oversight than hospitals. I was shocked to learn this fact from Betsy McCaughey in a recent chat with her on the subject. She explained most sadly how restaurants are checked by government agencies multiple times a year whereas a hospital is checked once every three years!.

How can this be? As Betsy exclaims; "Going to a restaurant is choice -- going to a hospital usually isn't." Where's CDC's control and prevention oversight here? (I bet you're starting to feel your anger kicking in - right?)

CDC Truth Gap #2:

About 5 percent of patients or 1 in 20 contract hospital acquired infections.

HA!

This figure is so understated that its credibility is really laughable. Aside from the fact that it's most recent data is from 2003, (ridiculous isn't it?), a more recent study from the Association of Professional in

Infections (APIC), puts the real number at 1 in 10 (not 1 in 20) and they believe their number is a conservative estimate. Big difference, right?

So one must ask, "Given the difference in numbers, what makes me think the CDC numbers are so wrong?" The simple, deadly truth is because the CDC did such a shoddy job in gathering its data. Here are some, obvious specifics:

- 1) Their latest information is from 2003 -- 'nuf said
 - 2) CDC information is based on voluntary data from 4 percent of hospitals (the operative word here is "voluntary" which if you think about it makes all the worse)
 - 3) The data is largely from Intensive Care Unit patients (seems silly right?)
 - 4) No data is collected from patients who leave the hospital but are sick when they leave, unless they go back to the same hospital for treatment (not likely wouldn't you say?)
- Bottom line -- they miss the mark by a mile when it comes to useful and relevant data on the scope of this issue. And the lack of accuracy in the scope of the problem means it moves to the bottom of the funding/ legislative/ attention pile.

Truth Gap #3: How many people are at risk

Now if you have followed the conversation thus far (and well done if you have), it becomes clear that the scope of the number of people impacted is so so much bigger that the CDC states.

But while THE CDC CLAIMS THERE ARE 1.7 MILLION HOSPITAL INFECTIONS A YEAR, THE TRUTH MAY BE SEVERAL TIMES THAT NUMBER (Yes -- I am digitally yelling with the "all caps").

Here's why. According to the 2007 APIC (Associations of Professionals in Infection Control) nationwide survey*, 2.4 percent of patients contract hospital-acquired, dangerous MRSA (this is the strain that can kill). Right there, we have over 800,000

people affected with a dangerous, life threatening disease. Now unfortunately, MRSA accounts for only 8 percent of all hospital infections. And that's what so frustratingly tragic because if you do some fancy math (Judy Consumer's clever teenage kid can help her), you realize now hospital acquired infection deaths is such a big issue it. Think about how much attention this issue would get if people fully understood the scope. We would have marathons and telethons and bake-a-thons with a campaign slogan like: "kill hospital acquired infections before it kills you" nationwide.

I told you. If you weren't mad until now, I bet you are mad now. Let's use that and do something about it. Let's take this over from the CDC and fix this by launching our own eradication education campaign and we can use technology to make sure our story gets out there.

Here's specifically what we can do:

1) Go through in your mind and see if any friends or relatives or co-workers or acquaintances may be going into surgery. Tell them about the 15 things they can do to help minimize their infection risk. This information is free and available at the RID website. These 15 things can literally save their lives. Better yet, post this link on your Facebook page and tell your friends to spread the word. This list is critical in our fight.

2) Arm yourself with information. Learn the infection rates for your local hospital, learn about special things Mothers-to-be should know when they go the hospital to have their baby, understand what MRSA is and how to minimize your exposure to it. RID (Reduce Infection Deaths) has all these tools, information and more to make you ready to fight. It's all there for you and it's all free.

3) Let's launch our own outreach campaign and get traction by educating people on the importance and preventability of hospital acquired infections. We can join with RID to share and spread the word and it doesn't cost a thing. Sign up for the newsletter to see our progress, tell your social networks, like Facebook about RID, download RID's toolbar. If you can, support the cause with a donation. But everyone can donate their time by using technology to broadcast the message as loudly as we can.

Make no mistake about it. This is a fight we absolutely can win. Let's show 'em what all us "Judy Consumers" are made of.

(*National Prevalence Study of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus in U.S. Healthcare Facilities , June 25, 2007")