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***COMMITTEE TO REDUCE INFECTION DEATHS CHALLENGES
HOSPITALS IN NEW YORK STATE TO COME CLEAN ON INFECTION***

New York, NY—Feb. 15—The Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths (RID) is inviting every hospital in New York State to join a voluntary effort to provide the public with hospital infection report cards. “If you need to be hospitalized, you should be able to find out which hospitals in your area have an infection problem,” says Betsy McCaughey, Ph.D., chairman of RID and former Lt. Governor of New York State.

In a letter mailed today, RID asks hospital CEOs to participate in developing a fair infection reporting system. In one month, on March 15th, the Committee will announce which hospitals have responded. “It’s time for hospitals to come forward and volunteer to disclose their infection rates. They want the public’s trust. This is one way to earn it. Hospitals are advertising for our business, but right now they are not telling us how many of their patients get infections,” McCaughey points out.

New York and some twenty other states require hospitals to report infections that are serious enough to cause permanent disability or death, but few hospitals fully comply and states go along with the hospital industry’s desire to keep the data far from public view.

“The inability of the public to know which hospitals are infection ridden is costing many lives,” warns McCaughey. Every year over two million people in the U.S. get infections in the hospital, and an estimated 103,000 die from them. Hospital infections kill as many people each year in the U.S. as AIDS, breast cancer, and auto accidents combined.¹

Most of these infections are preventable. A few hospitals are proving it. Yet overall in the U.S. the infection rate had not improved in thirty years or more. Why? Hospitals have not made infection reduction a top priority, and the public, kept in the dark about the problem, has not known how to avoid the most dangerous hospitals.

“Disclosing infection rates will motivate hospitals to improve,” says McCaughey, “and that will save lives.” McCaughey says hospitals in New York should sign up for this voluntary effort. “There are bills in the state legislature to require hospitals to report infections. They are a step in the right direction, but they don’t go far enough. They don’t guarantee that the public will have easy access to the information. If you’re going into the hospital, you should be able to get comparative infection rates off a website in a few minutes.” In England, hospital infection rates are posted at hospital entrances and in newspapers. “New Yorkers deserve the same information,” McCaughey says.

For a list of Committee members and more facts about hospital infection, see the Committee’s website www.hospitalinfection.org.

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¹ Annual AIDS deaths: 18,017, Centers for Disease Control. Annual breast cancer deaths: 40,870, Susan B. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation fact sheet. Annual traffic fatalities: 42,643, National Traffic Safety Administration fact sheet.