



## Health Protection Agency publishes quarterly Clostridium difficile and MRSA figures

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26 April 2007. Latest figures from the Health Protection Agency show there were 55,681 cases of Clostridium difficile infection reported in patients aged 65 years and above in England in 2006. This represents an annual increase in reported infections of 8% compared to 2005, when there were 51,767 cases reported. Rates of infection remain high across England, particularly in small acute trusts, and the results show clearly the scope for improvement. This contrasts favourably with the 17% increase in reported cases between 2004 and 2005.

The latest MRSA bloodstream infection figures, also released today, show that there were 1,542 cases reported in England from October 2006 to December 2006, down 7% on the previous quarter (July 2006 to September 2006), when there were 1,652 reported cases of bloodstream infections caused by MRSA.

In January, the Agency started publishing quarterly figures for the mandatory surveillance of MRSA bloodstream infections and Clostridium difficile disease. The Agency will continue to report these figures on a quarterly basis as part of our commitment to support hospitals so that they can gauge their efforts in reducing infections. Both sets of figures released today cover the October to December quarter for 2006. This quarter completes the year for Clostridium difficile figures, but the annual figures will not be available for MRSA bloodstream infections until July. This discrepancy arises as the surveillance started at different times for these infections – January for Clostridium difficile and April for MRSA bloodstream infections.

Dr Georgia Duckworth, head of the Agency's Healthcare Associated Infection & Antimicrobial Resistance Department, said: "We are publishing these quarterly figures to give Trusts more timely feedback on their individual situation and progress alongside other Trusts. However it is important that provisional figures like these are interpreted with caution, as numbers can fluctuate from quarter to quarter. Longer periods are needed to assess whether the trend in the number of infections is rising or falling.

"Although the annual figures for Clostridium difficile infections indicate a slowing down, numbers are still very high. Figures for MRSA bloodstream infections have been showing a decrease. We are awaiting the annual figures to confirm this is being sustained."

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