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By Sharon Hall, Account Executive

Clostridium difficile (C. diff or CDI) is hitting the news. As much as we would like the media to take a levelheaded approach to the subject, they're framing CDI as the next "killer infectious disease." Those of us in the healthcare industry have been fully aware of the rising danger of CDI for years.

The [CDC reports](#) that nearly 14,000 people die from CDI contracted in hospitals and clinics every year, and hundreds of thousands of other people have serious cases. This has led some institutions to adjust their cleaning schedules and methods to combat the infection according to [APIC guidelines](#).

Infection Prevention

APIC published a study in 2010 entitled Significant Impact of Terminal Room Cleaning with Bleach on Reducing Nosocomial Clostridium Difficile. This study monitored 3 hospitals over a 5 year period with an upgraded cleaning policy--which included bleach--with the express intent on preventing infection. The study found:

"The average number of CDI patients per 1000 patient days decreased from 0.85 in the preintervention period to 0.45 during bleach cleaning. This represents a 48% reduction in the prevalence density of patients with CDI for the 2 years after the bleaching intervention was implemented as compared with the prior 10 months."

AON's Hospital and Physician Professional Liability Annual Benchmark Analysis study has recently started to include CMS "Never Event" categories. The 2011 study isolated claims resulting from a selected set of CMS "health care acquired conditions." Health care acquired infections (HAI) accounted for 3.7% of these claims.

It's easy to recommend a more stringent cleaning schedule without thinking of the extra staff, extra time, and an ever tightening budget. These considerations are huge factors in the decision to implement changes in infection prevention policies. Consider these next steps:

1. Implement the [CDC checklist](#) regarding CDI infection.
2. Implement APIC standards and monitor the effectiveness of the program.
3. Closely track infections for both patients and out-patients.

Remember: Infection prevention = Claim prevention. [Contact me](#) for additional resources.