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My Turn

All hospitals are challenged by drug-resistant infections

Here's what we're doing in Concord

By **JAMES T. NOBLE**
For the Monitor

March 07, 2008 - 12:00 am

Infection has been a feared complication of hospitalization, and of medical procedures, since the beginning of organized medical care. The association of sick and vulnerable patients with sources of dangerous bacteria in hospitals, now complicated by advanced medical procedures - which carry the potential benefit of cure and additional risk of infection - has created the modern world of hospital infection.

For at least 20 years, a new threat has been developing: bacteria resistant to usual antibiotics. This resistance is a byproduct of the enormous revolution in human health and well-being brought about by the availability of curative treatment of previously fatal infections. In effect, our medical advances have resulted in increased infection risks. The widespread use of antibiotics, occasionally in situations where their use may be unnecessary, has allowed bacteria to develop the ability to resist the effect of these drugs.

This has had two harmful effects. First, it has made certain infections more difficult to treat. Second, it has created additional risk in settings, such as hospitals, where patients with infections may be concentrated.

Although hospitals have always been concerned with the prevention of infection, it was not until the 1970s that organized infection control programs got under way. With leadership from the U.S. Public Health Service and Centers for Disease Control and the support of professional organizations such as the Infectious Diseases Society of America, the Association of Professionals in Infection Control and others, hospitals have made significant strides toward the prevention and control of hospital infections.

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Although new challenges for the prevention of infection in the health-care environment continue to arise, Concord Hospital is actively engaged in the science and the practice of infection control. As problems change, our approaches change along with them, always keeping patient safety in the forefront of what we do. Although the nature of illness and modern medical and surgical treatment makes it impossible to prevent all infections, we remain committed to aggressive and excellent infection control, consistent with national standards and best clinical practice.

For more information about MRSA, visit the Concord Hospital website at concordhospital.org.

(Dr. James T. Noble is the medical director of Concord Hospital's infection control department.)

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