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Coverage
United Kingdom
Theme
Health and Care

Deaths involving MRSA and *Clostridium difficile* continue to rise

Health Statistics Quarterly Spring 2007

The number of death certificates in England and Wales that mentioned *Staphylococcus aureus* infection increased each year from 2001 to 2005, from 1,211 to 2,083, according to new data published today by the Office for National Statistics. The percentage of these deaths where *Staphylococcus aureus* was specified as meticillin resistant (MRSA) rose from 61 per cent in 2001 to 78 per cent in 2005.

The number of death certificates in England and Wales that mentioned *Clostridium difficile* increased from 1,214 in 2001 to 3,807 in 2005. Between 2004 and 2005 the number of deaths involving *C. difficile* increased by 69 per cent.

The new reports on deaths involving MRSA in England and Wales 2001 – 2005 and deaths involving *Clostridium difficile* in England and Wales 2001 – 2005 are published in *Health Statistics Quarterly 33* (Spring 2007), available free on the National Statistics website:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=6725>

Deaths involving MRSA: England and Wales, 2001–2005

This is the third annual report on deaths in England and Wales where meticillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) was reported as a contributory factor. Data for 2005 are published for the first time.

More key findings show:

- MRSA was mentioned on one in every 500 death certificates over the period 2001-2005.
- The increase in the number of death certificates specifying MRSA accounted for most of the increase in deaths where *S. aureus* was mentioned.

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- The age standardised rates for deaths involving MRSA doubled for both males and females between 2001 and 2005. For men the rate increased from 12.5 to 25.0 per million population, while for women it rose from 6.7 to 14.5 per million population.
- Between 2004 and 2005, mentions of MRSA on death certificates increased by 39 per cent. However, the Health Protection Agency's mandatory MRSA surveillance scheme [introduced in April 2001] showed a small fall in laboratory reports over a similar period. The Chief Medical Officer reminded doctors, in his update of July 2005, to include MRSA and other healthcare associated infections on death certificates whenever they thought these infections had contributed to the death. Some of the increase in mentions of MRSA may be due to improved levels of reporting on death certificates.

Deaths involving *Clostridium difficile*: England and Wales, 2001–2005

This is the second report on deaths in England and Wales where *Clostridium difficile* was mentioned as a contributory factor. Data for 2005 are published for the first time.

More key findings show:

- *C. difficile* was mentioned on 1 in every 250 death certificates over the period 2001-2005.
- Among death certificates with a mention of *C. difficile*, the percentage for which it was the underlying cause was similar (around 55 per cent) in each year.
- Age-standardised rates for deaths involving *C. difficile* among males in England and Wales almost tripled between 2001 and 2005, from 13.1 to 37.6 per million population. Among females, rates more than tripled, from 12.8 per million to 38.9 per million.

In January 2004, the Health Protection Agency introduced a mandatory reporting scheme for all cases of *C. difficile* in persons aged 65 and over. Data from the scheme show an increase between 2004 and 2005 in the number of *C. difficile* reports. However, this increase is lower than the rise in the number of deaths involving *C. difficile*.

Greater awareness and high public profile of the disease may have contributed to an increase in the reporting of *C. difficile* on death certificates.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. To see the News Release relating the other content of *Health Statistics Quarterly* 33: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/alrate0207.pdf>
2. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
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