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Study: Infection risk low at area hospitals

By Jason Foster - jfoster@heraldonline.com

The risk of contracting an infection after surgery at one of the three hospitals in York, Chester and Lancaster counties is generally very low and on par with national averages, according to a new state health study.

The second Hospital Infections Disclosure Act Annual Report shows Piedmont Medical Center in Rock Hill, Chester Regional Medical Center in Chester and Springs Memorial Hospital in Lancaster all fall in line with national infection rates for hospitals of their type. The comparison criteria takes into account the number of rooms, number and type of procedures offered and performed, patient demographics and whether a hospital is a teaching hospital, among other factors.

"The target is zero (infections), but it's hard to not have some infections," said Dixie Roberts, section director for health care associated infection reporting for the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, which released the information this week. "Not all infections are preventable."

The reporting period for the report was generally from Dec. 1, 2008, though Nov. 30, 2009, and included information on certain procedures such as coronary bypass graft, gallbladder surgery, hip replacement and hysterectomy.

"We follow our infection rates closely. We know what they are well before they're reported," said Dr. Richard Patterson, chief medical officer at Piedmont Medical Center. "We're dealing with continuous surveillance."

Patterson said PMC has a "robust" system for reducing infections. It includes carefully monitoring antibiotics in the operating room, following surgical patients intently to make sure proper dosages are administered and training staff on things such as the

proper preparation of the operating room environment and the importance of frequently washing hands.



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