

# Study estimates costs of health-care-associated infections

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A study estimates that total annual costs for five major health care-associated infections (HAIs) were \$9.8 billion, with surgical site infections contributing the most to overall costs, according to a report published by *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

HAIs are associated with high costs and better evaluation of the cost of these infections could help providers and payers justify investing in prevention, according to background information in the study by Eyal Zimlichman, M.D., M.Sc., of Brigham and Women's Hospital and the Harvard Medical School, Boston, and colleagues.

Researchers reviewed published [medical literature](#) for the years 1986 through April 2013. For HAI incidence estimates, researchers used the National Healthcare Safety Network of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"As one of the most common sources of preventable harm, health care-associated infections (HAIs) represent a major threat to patient safety," the authors note. "The purpose of this study was to generate estimates of the costs associated with the most significant and targetable HAIs."

According to the results, on a per-case basis, the central line-associated [bloodstream infections](#) were found to be the most costly HAIs at \$45,814, followed by ventilator-associated pneumonia at \$40,144, surgical site infections at \$20,785, *Clostridium difficile* infection at \$11,285 and catheter-associated [urinary tract infections](#) at \$896.

"While quality improvement initiatives have decreased HAI incidence and costs, much more remains to be done. As hospitals realize savings from prevention of these complications under payment reforms, they may be more likely to invest in such strategies," the study concludes.

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