

Most staph infections resistant to antibiotics occur in the community

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Patients most at risk of the drug-resistant staph infection in the community are young people, Indigenous Australians and residents of aged-care facilities.

Credit: Connor Tarter, Flickr

The proportion of staph infections resistant to antibiotics has increased in Australia since 2000 with most cases now occurring in the community rather than in hospitals, a new study led by ANU has found.

A staph [infection](#) occurs when the staphylococcus bacteria invades the body, resulting most commonly in [skin infections](#) such as boils.

However, more than 2,300 cases of severe staph infections—where the bacteria entered the bloodstream causing sepsis, which is potentially deadly—occurred across Australia in 2015.

Lead researcher Dr Jason Agostino from the ANU Medical School said about 60 per cent of drug-resistant staph infections were picked up in the community, so [infection control](#) needed to shift from hospitals to the community.

"The problem of infections resistant to antibiotics in our community is not just a theoretical problem that will happen some time in the future—it's happening right now," Dr Agostino said.

The researchers built on national data from previous studies and used pathology results from about 40,000 patients in the Hunter New England Local Health District, who provided specimens from 2008 to 2014.

Until the early 2000s in Australia, staph infections resistant to antibiotics mostly occurred in hospitals. The researchers found [hospital](#) infection rates are improving, with decreased infections in two of the region's largest hospitals.

"It's great to see a drop in drug-resistant staph infections in hospitals, but we need to develop more targeted use of [antibiotics](#) in the community," Dr Agostino said.

Patients most at risk of the drug-resistant staph infection in the community are young people, Indigenous Australians and residents of aged-care facilities.

"We also need to improve the way we share data on antibiotic resistance to staph infections and link this to hospitalisation across health systems," Dr Agostino said.

They analysed the data with the aim of identifying groups at risk of the infection, patterns of antimicrobial resistance, and the proportion of patients with drug-resistant [staph](#) infections but no history of recent hospitalisation.

ANU conducted the research with John Hunter Hospital, the University of Newcastle, NSW Health Pathology and Hunter New England Health.

The research is published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

Provided by Australian National University

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