

# National group publishes approach to improve pediatric sepsis surveillance

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Sepsis is a major public health problem, contributing to substantial

disability, death, and healthcare costs in the United States among both adults and children. Though sepsis is the focus of worldwide prevention and quality improvement efforts, tracking sepsis rates and outcomes is challenging because a definitive diagnostic test does not yet exist. Sepsis is particularly difficult to track in infants and children because of age-related differences in responses to infection and treatment approaches.

To address the need for widespread, reliable sepsis tracking among infants and [children](#), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention convened a multidisciplinary pediatric working group to develop a national approach for pediatric sepsis [surveillance](#). The working group's proposed approach is described by Heather E. Hsu, MD, MPH and colleagues in the journal *Pediatrics*.

The article highlights the opportunities and advantages of using electronic health record data, rather than administrative claims or chart reviews, to facilitate widespread sepsis surveillance. The authors also propose a preliminary pediatric sepsis surveillance case definition adapted to address specific differences and challenges among infants and children. In addition, the proposal includes an outline of next steps for refining and validating criteria used to estimate the national burden of pediatric sepsis and support site-specific surveillance to complement existing initiatives for improving sepsis prevention, recognition, and treatment.

"Pediatric [sepsis](#) affects millions of children worldwide every year. It is both preventable and treatable, but we need a reliable way of measuring it to know whether our efforts are working," says Hsu, a pediatrician at Boston Medical Center and assistant professor of pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine. "What we have created is an approach that, if carried out effectively, could be used by clinicians, quality officers, [policy-makers](#) and public health officials to further drive innovation and improvements in the prevention, detection, and

management of this deadly disease."

**More information:** Heather E. Hsu et al, A National Approach to Pediatric Sepsis Surveillance, *Pediatrics* (2019). [DOI: 10.1542/peds.2019-1790](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-1790)

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