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## MRSA screening pays for itself: study

By Maureen McKinney

Screening intensive-care-unit patients for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA, pays for itself, according to a study published in the *American Journal of Infection Control*.

Using patient data from the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Medical Center, researchers determined that the cost of screening ICU patients for MRSA—a process that entails nasal swabbing and laboratory analysis—actually resulted in a net savings of about \$500 per hospital admission.

For instance, hospitals that used a standard culture test to screen for MRSA saw per-patient costs of \$18,051 without the intervention, but that number dropped to \$17,567 per patient with the screening. That's because the intervention prevents 0.0321 MRSA infections per admission, offsetting the cost per patient for screening.

This study presents evidence of the cost savings from implementing a program that targets the ICU population but that has an effect that is hospital-wide, the authors wrote in the study.

They also pushed for hospitals to evaluate screening of ICU patients as just one component of an effective infection-control strategy. Hospitals must consider how this type of program fits into their overall institutional, infection-prevention programs and realize that this intervention is only one of many alternative interventions that are designed to prevent healthcare-associated infections, according to the authors.

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