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**Media contacts:** Mark Coyle  
(571) 276-1893  
miramx1@aol.com

**COMMITTEE TO REDUCE INFECTION DEATHS CALLS ON MARYLAND LAWMAKERS TO REQUIRE EFFECTIVE INFECTION CONTROL IN HOSPITALS AND STOP NEEDLESS DEATHS**

The future safety of hospital patients in Maryland is in the hands of state lawmakers today, as they consider a bill (61r1729) that will require hospitals to implement more rigorous infection prevention measures.

Betsy McCaughey, Ph.D., former Lt. Governor of New York State and Founder of the Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths (RID) will come to Maryland today to call on state lawmakers to require more effective infection control.

McCaughey will present copious evidence that the standard CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) measures are ineffective. “Studies show that deadly bacteria spread from patient to patient fifteen times as fast under lax CDC standards as under the more rigorous precautions specified in the proposed bill,” McCaughey said.

“Hygiene is so inadequate in our hospitals that one out of every twenty patients contracts an infection in the hospital. The danger is worsening because hospital infections, increasingly, cannot be cured with commonly used antibiotics. One of the deadliest germs is *methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus* (or MRSA). In 1974, 2% of Staph infections were MRSA. By 1995, the number had climbed to 22%, in 2003 an alarming 57%, and still rising.”

“A few hospitals in the U.S have proved that drug resistant infections are nearly all preventable. The University of Virginia Hospital eradicated MRSA in the 1980s. The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center – Presbyterian Hospital slashed MRSA by 90% in its medical intensive care unit. Twenty nine healthcare institutions in Iowa eliminated another drug-resistant germ, *vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus* (or VRE).”

“We have the knowledge to prevent infections. What has been lacking is the will. Most hospitals have not made infection prevention a top priority. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are also to blame. The CDC have tracked the rapid rise in drug-resistant infections for a quarter century but has not recommended that all hospitals take the rigorous steps that work in stopping infections,” McCaughey explained.

“The evidence is clear that the precautions prescribed by the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) are far more effective than CDC guidelines, yet the CDC continue to delay advocating these more rigorous precautions. Every year of delay is costing thousands of lives and billions of dollars. It’s time for the states to act,” said McCaughey.

“This legislation, which advocates these SHEA guidelines, will save lives and save money for the taxpayers and consumers of Maryland. Infections are adding billions a year to hospital costs. The measures advocated in this bill cost little, and return about a 10 to 1 financial payback in reducing hospital costs as infections decline.”

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*The Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths (RID) is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to providing hospital administrators, caregivers, insurers, and patients with the information they need to stop hospital infections. For more information, see: <http://www.hospitalinfection.org>*