Overview
Healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) are a major cause of Veteran morbidity and mortality. There were an estimated 722,000 HAIs in U.S. acute care hospitals in 2011, resulting in 75,000 deaths, at a cost of $4.5-5.7 billion per year. VA’s Blueprint for Excellence highlights the need for HAI prevention, as HAIs greatly impact patient safety through increased readmissions and mortality. The VA Healthcare-Associated Infection Prevention Network (VHIN) is a platform where quality improvement researchers can investigate possible projects, find resources, seek sites for studies and formally link with Veteran patients and caregivers on HAI prevention and control issues.

VHIN can expedite the conduct of studies at local facilities, help identify site-specific solutions, and assist in detecting emerging practice-based priority areas. VHIN aims to:

• Develop a research network to rapidly deploy and evaluate evidence-based interventions for HAI prevention across VA;
• Facilitate future quality improvement studies to achieve the best possible outcomes within sustainable cost; and
• Allow a broad-scale evaluation of practices, examining both their implementation as well as patient experience with these practices.

Methodology
VHIN’s multiple aims and activities require the collaboration of several interacting components:

To examine current HAI prevention practices, VHIN deployed a needs assessment covering four infection prevention content areas:

- General;
- Chlorhexidine gluconate bathing;
- C. difficile infection prevention practices; and
- Carbapenem resistant Enterobacteriaceae prevention practices.
Findings and Anticipated Impact
The needs assessment identified barriers, facilitators, and variations in infection-prevention practices at different VA facilities. VHIN also developed a suite of recommendations supported by survey data, with specific suggestions for the following categories to:

- Promote ongoing effectiveness and improvement of prevention practices related to emerging multidrug-resistant organisms;
- Increase the infection prevention knowledge and competency of Infection Control teams;
- Increase the daily involvement of team members in performing infection control functions; and
- Promote the implementation of evidence-based HAI prevention practices, including chlorhexidine gluconate bathing and the VA C. difficile prevention bundle.

VHIN’s platform brings collaborating researchers, clinicians, patients, and families together to rapidly disseminate and evaluate evidence-based interventions for HAI prevention.

Results and recommendations from VHIN can impact both local clinical practices and national policies. The results of the needs assessment have already informed a research agenda for HAI prevention.

Operations Partner(s)
The National Center for Patient Safety is part of the VA Quality, Safety & Value, which leads VA patient safety efforts and works to reduce and prevent the inadvertent harm to patients as a result of healthcare.

www.queri.research.va.gov