



# **SPECIAL** REPORT

## **Surgical Site Infections**

**OR** Manager 

# Introduction

Increased penalties for readmissions imposed by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services have encouraged healthcare providers to reduce the incidence of surgical site infections (SSIs). For example, respondents to the 2015 OR Manager Salary/Career Survey cited infection prevention as the top strategy for curbing readmissions, and many facilities have successfully lowered their SSI rates.

Yet the problem persists. In a recent SSI document, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that advances have been made in infection control practices, but says, “SSIs remain a substantial cause of morbidity, prolonged hospitalization, and death. SSI is associated with a mortality rate of 3%, and 75% of SSI associated deaths are directly attributable to the SSI.”

According to a 2015 study in the Journal of the American Medical Association, surgical site infection was the most common reason for 30-day readmission in patients who had undergone bariatric procedures, colectomy or proctectomy, hysterectomy, total hip or knee arthroplasty, ventral hernia repair, and lower extremity vascular bypass. Furthermore, concern about carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae infections is ongoing; inadequate cleaning and disinfection of flexible endoscopes ranks number 4 on ECRI Institute’s Top 10 Patient Safety Concerns for 2016.

This *Special Report: Surgical Site Infections* offers a compilation of *OR Manager* articles that reflect best practices and new technology to curb SSIs. For example, an assessment tool for neurosurgical spine SSIs is still undergoing validation but shows promise as a way to identify at-risk patients and could be adopted for use with other types of procedures. Other recent research has demonstrated that reusable eyewear in the OR raises infection risks for patients and healthcare workers alike.

Surgical services leaders need to stay abreast of this kind of research and monitor practices in the OR as well as the sterile processing department. This special report has been carefully compiled to help them do just that, with articles on infection prevention protocols, instrument packaging and sterilization methods, and guidelines to help pass survey inspections. The expert advice and best practices in this report reflect important strategies to combat SSIs and increase the safety of patients and staff.

Elizabeth Wood

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# Table of Contents

<b>Tool assesses SSI risk in spine patients.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Low-temperature sterilization: A disinfection alternative.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Don't let faulty processing put a damper on instrument packaging.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>UV light disinfection robots help to overpower pathogens.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Risk assessment and remedial action required to curb infections.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Infection prevention tops list of readmission 'action items' .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Specific care bundles successfully cut surgical site infection rates.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Infection control noncompliance cited in high percentage of Joint Commission surveys.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Combine and conquer: OR/CSPD collaboration dramatically reduces IUSS rates.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Reusable protective eyewear tied to greater risk of contamination.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>New AORN recommendations focus on infection prevention, patient safety .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>ASCs must prepare to meet latest CMS infection control expectations .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>'Operation Zero' targets surgical site infections.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Are you on target for meeting SSI, SCIP metrics? .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Preventing SSIs: Keys to solutions lie with your front-line clinicians .....</b>	<b>46</b>