Finding solutions to enhance patient safety

At a time when needed attention is being focused on the prevention of healthcare-associated infections, there is growing concern about the risks for transmitting infections from reuse of syringes and single dose vials and other unsafe injection practices. In the past decade, failures to follow safe injection practices (e.g., misuse of syringes, needles, and vials) in a variety of U.S. healthcare settings resulted in more than 30 outbreaks of infectious diseases, including hepatitis C, and notification of more than 125,000 patients. The solution requires collaboration among stakeholders, adherence to clinical best practices, surveillance, innovative product designs, and provider and patient education. The Premier healthcare alliance and the Safe Injection Practices Coalition are working together to raise awareness and continue the national dialogue on expanding safer and innovative approaches and product designs to protect patients and prevent infections related to unsafe injection practices.

Patients have a right to expect that they won’t get an infection after an injection

- As reported in the Wall Street Journal, healthcare providers do not come to work with the intent of harming a patient. Yet, lack of awareness and mistaken beliefs about safe injection practices are putting their patients at risk.

- Although most providers follow best practices, a peer-reviewed study authored by the Premier healthcare alliance found 6 percent of providers inappropriately reuse single use vials on more than one patient; 1 percent reuse a syringe, only changing the needle for use on a second patient; and 15 percent reported reuse of a syringe to enter a multi-dose vial and of this group, 6.5 percent reported saving vials for use on another patient.

- Safe injection guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that single-dose vials not be used for multiple patients. The guidelines also recommend syringes and needles to be used only once and not reused for another patient or to access a medication or solution that might be used for a subsequent patient.

The Premier healthcare alliance is committed to working with providers and patients, manufacturers and government to prevent infections and improve the overall safety of healthcare

- Safety recommendations to prevent unsafe injection practices were recently developed by nearly 200 stakeholders, including representatives from government, public health, clinicians, professional and accreditation organizations, product manufacturers and patients at an open meeting convened by the Premier healthcare alliance and the Safe Injection Practices Coalition.
According to participants at the Safer Designs for Safer Injections: Innovations in Process, Products and Practices meeting, ensuring safe injection practices in all healthcare settings will require a focus on monitoring current practices with increased oversight and enforcement; education and empowerment of clinicians and patients; and redesign of devices, products and processes to reduce risk.

*What's being said?*

“Safe practice is not optional; it’s a basic expectation anywhere injections are delivered.”

- Dr. Joseph Perz of the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov)

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**About the Premier healthcare alliance, Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award recipient**

Premier is a performance improvement alliance of more than 2,500 U.S. hospitals and 75,000-plus other healthcare sites using the power of collaboration to lead the transformation to high quality, cost-effective care. Owned by hospitals, health systems and other providers, Premier maintains the nation's most comprehensive repository of clinical, financial and outcomes information and operates a leading healthcare purchasing network. A world leader in helping deliver measurable improvements in care, Premier has worked with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the United Kingdom’s National Health Service North West to improve hospital performance. Headquartered in Charlotte, N.C., Premier also has an office in Washington.