Simple measures cut infections caught in hospitals

**BY LINDSEY TANNER**

**CHICAGO** — Preventing surgery-linked infections is a major concern for hospitals, and it turns out some simple measures can make a big difference.

A project at seven big hospitals reduced infections after colorectal surgeries by nearly one-third.

It prevented an estimated 135 infections, saving almost $4 million, the Joint Commission hospital regulating group and the American College of Surgeons announced recently. The two groups directed the 2½-year project.

Solutions included having patients shower with special germ-fighting soap before surgery, and having surgery teams change gowns, gloves and instruments during operations to prevent spreading germs picked up during the procedure.

Some hospitals used special wound-protecting devices on surgery openings to keep intestinal germs from reaching the skin.

The average rate of infections linked with colorectal operations at the seven hospitals dropped from about 16 percent of patients during a 10-month phase when hospitals started adopting changes to almost 11 percent once all the changes had been made.

Hospital stays for patients who got infections dropped from an average of 15 days to 13 days, which helped cut costs.

“The improvements translate into safer patient care,” said Dr. Mark Chassin, president of the Joint Commission. “Now it’s our job to spread these effective interventions to all hospitals.”

Cancer Society thanks volunteers, request more

**Staff report**

The American Cancer Society makes it particularly easy for Paducah area residents to find ways to volunteer during the holidays and year round.

Meaningful opportunities are available for volunteers who want to assist local cancer patients and their families.

To learn how to become a valuable volunteer, call the area office in Paducah at 444-0375 or 24 hours a day through a free call to 1-800-227-2345.

The American Cancer Society also offers information and support through this nationwide toll-free help line, day, night, even on holidays.

Volunteer opportunities could include:

- Driving cancer patients to and from their treatments.
- Being a cancer survivor who can give patients an opportunity to talk about their fears and concerns.
- Recruiting teams, raising money and planning events.

South Africa continues to progress in two decade-long HIV/AIDS fight

**BY CARLEY PETESCH**

**JOHANNESBURG** — In the early 1990s when South Africa’sThemba Lethu clinic could treat HIV/AIDS patients only for opportunistic diseases, many would come in on wheelchairs and keep coming to the health center until they died.

Two decades later, the clinic is the biggest ARV (anti-retroviral) treatment center in the country and sees between 600 to 800 patients a day from all over southern Africa. Those who are brought in on wheelchairs, sometimes the brink of death, get the crucial drugs and often become healthy and are walking within weeks.

“The ARVs are called the Lazarus drug because people rise up and walk,” said Dr. Sue Roberts, who has been a nurse at the clinic, run by Right to Care in Johannesburg’s Helen Joseph Hospital, since it opened its doors in 1992. She said they recently treated a woman who was pushed in a wheelchair for almost 2 miles to avoid a taxi fare and who was so sick it was touch and go. Two weeks later, the woman walked to the clinic. Roberts said.

Such stories of hope and progress are readily available on World AIDS Day, Dec. 1, since 2005 when governments and international groups declared it an annual event to fight the global AIDS epidemic.

**Please see DRIVES | 2C**
UNAIDS report. As people around the world are fighting the reduction in the rate of HIV infections, the growth of the clinic, which was one of only two opened its doors 20 years ago, reflects how changes in treatment and attitude toward the HIV/AIDS have moved South Africa forward. The nation, which has the most people living with HIV/AIDS at 5.6 million, still faces enormous strides in the fight against the infection.

“Your offer is a good time for the clinic to be given the best care, including TB screening and care at the clinic, and not to look at the cost,” said Christinah Motsoahae, associate director of the clinic who said treatment options have fallen by more than half since the clinic opened two years ago. South Africa has also increased its domestic expenditure of $18 billion, the highest by any country, the group said. The Themba Lethu clinic, with funding from the government, UNAID and PEPFAR, is now among some 2,500 ARV facilities in the country that treat approximately 1.9 million people.

“No, you can’t not get help because you’re not seeing a local doctor,” he said. “We have to continue helping our patients to understand the importance of right treatment and how that will make them healthy.”

The Paducah Sun

House Call Weekly

Volunteer

“We do everything we can to improve quality of life for patients, caregivers, and survivors during and after diagnosis and treatment.”

Mary Huff

Health initiatives representative

American Cancer Society, Paducah

AIDS

CONTINUED FROM 1C

in right now,” said Dr. Kay Benton.

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“We do everything we can to improve quality of life for patients, caregivers, and survivors during and after diagnosis and treatment.”

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20 years ago, reflecting how changes in treatment and attitude toward the HIV/AIDS have moved South Africa forward. The nation, which has the most people living with HIV/AIDS at 5.6 million, still faces enormous strides in the fight against the infection.
Louis Edward Klein

Louis Edward Klein, 80, of Paducah, passed away at 10:15 a.m. on Sunday, December 2, 2012, at Lourdes hospital. Louis was a graduate of St. Mary Academy, a member of St. Francis De Sales Catho- lic Church, he was a retired

Funeral notices

Paid obituaries furnished to the Paducah Sun by mortuaries.

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