



Technical Advisory: HAI-2015-002

Christine Filipovich, MSN, RN
Acting Deputy Secretary for Quality Assurance

June 2015

Healthcare-Associated Infection Prevention Section

Department of Health guidance regarding the National Safety Healthcare Network (NHSN) new present at the time of surgery (PATOS) field.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated the NHSN surveillance definitions and criteria for reporting in January 2015. A new mandatory data entry field, present at time of surgery (PATOS) for surgical site infection reporting, was added.

PATOS denotes that there is evidence of an infection or abscess at the start of or during the index surgical procedure. In other words, it was present preoperatively. Infections that meet surgical site infection (SSI) criteria and have the **PATOS field as YES must continue to be reported to NHSN**. Each of these infections should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine if it is a continuation or recurrence of a preexisting infection or it is a new infection.

Please note¹:

- PATOS does not apply if there is a period of wellness between the time of a pre-operative condition and the surgery.
- The evidence of infection must be documented preoperatively or found intraoperatively in a pre-operative or intra-operative note.
- Only select PATOS = YES if it applies to the depth of SSI that is being attributed to the procedure (e.g., if a patient had evidence of an intraabdominal infection at the time of surgery and then later returns with an organ space SSI the PATOS field would be selected as a YES. If the patient returned with a superficial or deep incisional SSI the PATOS field would be selected as a NO).
- The patient does not have to meet the NHSN definition of an SSI at the time of the primary procedure but there must be notation that there is evidence of infection or abscess present at the time of surgery.

¹NHSN January 2015 (modified April 2015), Procedure-associated module, surgical site infection (SSI) event reporting instructions, page 9-17.

While these infections must be reported to NHSN per the CDC surveillance definitions and as per the requirements outlined in Act 52 of 2007 Chapter 4 §1303.404(b), the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Patient Safety Authority **do not require written notification of infections that were PATOS** per Act 13 of 2002, Section 308(b).

For further guidance related to reporting of surgical site infections, please refer to Chapter 9 of the CDC NHSN Manual.

Questions regarding this advisory may be directed to the Healthcare-Associated Infection Prevention Section, Telephone (717) 425-5422.