

Johns Hopkins Awarded \$10 Million Contract to Reduce Surgical Infections

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Johns Hopkins' [Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality](#) has been awarded \$10 million for a project designed to reduce surgical-site infections and other major complications of colon surgery.

The money comes from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), part of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the project is in partnership with the American College of Surgeons (ACS).

Armstrong Institute Director Peter J. Pronovost, M.D., Ph.D., says the work will be modeled on the success his team has had in developing a cockpit-style, five-step checklist coupled with a program of departmental culture change that dramatically reduced central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSIs) in intensive-care units (ICUs) throughout the state of Michigan. Pronovost's Comprehensive Unit-based Safety Program (CUSP) — now in place in nearly every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and many nations around the world — is believed to have saved thousands of lives and millions of health care dollars.

“This work will build on our knowledge of how to prevent central-line infections and apply it to the task of preventing surgical-site infections, pneumonia, deep-vein thrombosis and other common surgical complications,” he says. “We should be able to repeat that success in other areas.”

The use of the ACS's vast database will be an invaluable part of the new research, Pronovost says. The surgical safety program will begin in 10 states, in at least 10 hospitals in each state. The hope is to ultimately create programs in all 50 states that can be used to reduce surgical-site infections and complications and eventually to reduce infections in other kinds of surgeries. Hopkins will also partner with the World Health Organization to broadly disseminate what is learned to countries around the world.

The project will utilize a new concept known as clinical communities, a system of developing patient safety and quality improvement programs from the ground up instead of having new directives sent down from executives.

AHRQ has also awarded the Armstrong Institute over \$700,000 for an 18-month program to develop and implement CUSP in two states to prevent ventilator-associated pneumonia. Once the pilot program shows positive results, the hope is that it, too, could be implemented nationwide.

This contract is one of several important new contracts or grants received by the new Armstrong Institute, established in May with a \$10 million gift from C. Michael Armstrong, the chairman of the board of trustees of Johns Hopkins Medicine and retired chairman of Comcast, AT&T, Hughes Electronics and IBM World Trade Corporation. The goal of the institute is to advance the science of reducing preventable harm and to improve health care quality, in order to benefit not only Johns Hopkins patients but those around the world. A website devoted to the institute can be found at <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/armstrong-institute>.

For more information on AHRQ's recent awards aimed at the fight against health care-associated infections, go to <http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/haify11.htm>.

