

The killer that is stalking the ward

MRSA Action research disputes Health Protection Agency claims that the Government is well on top of the super bug crisis. **Derek Butler** explains

Close scrutiny of the MRSA figures released by the Health Protection Agency in July led MRSA Action UK to the conclusion that still more effort is needed in the focus on patient safety.

We have seen in the papers recently the story of the lady who died with MRSA who was not counted in the figures. The sad fact is that this lady, and many others like her, has passed away with a wound infection not accounted for in the Government's statistics.

In many cases, patients may be dying with their blood untested. We cannot be certain that the reporting is accurate or honest. Zero cases of MRSA should mean just that; it is misleading to claim zero cases when people are still dying with wound infections.

The Health Protection Agency MRSA figures released on July 17, 2008 have raised issues that have not been reported widely. Contrary to Health Secretary Alan Johnson's statement that we are within touching distance of reaching the 50 per cent reduction in MRSA bacteraemias set by John Reid on November 5, 2004, we find that:

- The actual reduction is 36.25 per cent and not almost 50 per cent as proclaimed by the Government.

- The total number of MRSA bacteraemias for 2007/08 is 4,438, 588 more than the Government target of 3,850.

- Of the 170 NHS Trusts in England and Wales, 63.5 per cent failed to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in their MRSA bacteraemias by March this year compared to 2004 figures.

- An incredible 17 of the NHS Trusts in England and Wales had more MRSA bacteraemias by March 2008 than they had in March 2004. This is equivalent to 10 per cent of the NHS Trusts.

- 22 NHS Trusts in England and Wales made less than a 10 per cent improvement in their MRSA bacteraemias between March 2004 and March 2008. This is equivalent to 13 per cent of NHS Trusts.

- 36 NHS Trusts missed their 50 per cent reduction target of MRSA bacteraemias by 10 or more cases of MRSA bacteraemias. This is equivalent to 21 per cent of the NHS Trusts.

- 15 NHS Trusts missed their 50 per cent reduction target of MRSA bacteraemias by 19 or more cases of MRSA bacteraemias. This is equivalent to 9 per cent of the NHS Trusts.



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- Eight NHS Trusts missed their MRSA reduction target of MRSA bacteraemias by 20 or more case of MRSA bacteraemias. This is equivalent to 5 per cent of NHS Trusts.

- A staggering 68 NHS Trusts who had the highest number of MRSA bacteraemias in 2004 have failed to achieve the 50 per cent reduction. This is equivalent to 40 per cent of NHS Trusts.

- 65 per cent of NHS Foundation Trusts failed to meet the 50 per cent reduction in MRSA bacteraemias / 5 NHS Foundation Trusts had higher rates of MRSA in 2008 than in 2004 by as many as 13 cases.

On a regional basis, the worst performing Strategic Health Authorities are:

- North East: 100 per cent failed to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in MRSA bacteraemias / one NHS Trust with higher rates of MRSA in 2008 than in 2004.

- North West: 79 per cent failed to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in MRSA bacteraemias / five NHS Trust with higher rates of MRSA in 2008 than in 2004.

- South West: 77 per cent failed to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in MRSA bacteraemias / one NHS Trust with higher rates of MRSA in 2008 than in 2004.

- Yorkshire: 73 per cent failed to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in MRSA bacteraemias / three NHS Trust with higher rates of MRSA in 2008 than in 2004.

- East Midlands: 62.5 per cent failed to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in MRSA bacteraemias.

- South East: 58 per cent failed to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in MRSA bacteraemias / four NHS Trust with higher rates of MRSA in 2008 than in 2004.

- East of England: 55 per cent failed to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in MRSA bacteraemias.

- West Midlands: 52 per cent failed to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in MRSA bacteraemias / one NHS Trust with higher rates of MRSA in 2008 than in 2004.

- London: 45 per cent failed to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in MRSA bacteraemias / two NHS Trust with higher rates of MRSA in 2008 than in 2004.

Derek Butler is the chairman of MRSA Action UK