Sores, Surgery Errors Top 2012 Indiana Medical Errors

Serious bed sores reported by Indiana's hospitals and clinics fell to 30 last year from 41 in 2011, the Indiana State Department of Health said Monday.

According to the 2012 Medical Errors Report, stage three or stage four bed sores — known formally as pressure ulcers — have been the most common medical error in six of the seven years the report has been compiled. The average is about 30 incidents per year, the department said.

A total of 100 medical errors were reported — the same number as in 2011 — in a survey of Indiana's 289 hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers, abortion clinics, and birthing centers, the department said.

"Medical errors are serious and preventable," State Health Commissioner Dr. William VanNess said in a news release. "I hope this report serves as a call to action to health care providers around the state to be even more vigilant in their attention to detail when caring for patients."

The other most common medical errors last year were 19 incidents of foreign objects left in patients after surgeries, 15 surgeries performed on the wrong body parts and 14 falls resulting in deaths or serious disabilities, the report said.

The report also noted seven deaths or serious disabilities associated with contaminated drugs, a number that coincides with the department's previous reports of seven people dying after an outbreak of fungal meningitis connected to injections of a back pain medication produced by a Massachusetts pharmacy.

Indiana had a total of 68 cases of fungal meningitis linked to the contaminated steroids administered at clinics in Columbus, Elkhart, Evansville, Fort Wayne, South Bend and Terre Haute.

The annual report is based on 28 "serious adverse events" identified by the National Quality Forum. Indiana in 2006 became the second state to adopt the group's reporting standards.

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