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K. Godamunne *et al.*

Opinion

Malnutrition and healthcare-acquired infections: the need for policy change in an evolving healthcare landscape

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The evolution of healthcare around the world calls for new healthcare policies that focus on improving outcomes and decreasing costs to optimize patient value. For example, the Affordable Care Act in the USA emphasizes the need for measures to improve the quality of care and penalizes preventable healthcare-associated adverse events. Patient satisfaction and safety are key elements in this policy, which focuses on the most cost-effective measures to improve patient care. Among all the initiatives to improve patient care, one area of healthcare improvements that continues to receive attention is reducing healthcare-associated infections (HCAIs).

HCAIs have been observed in 5–10% of all hospital admissions in the USA and Western Europe.¹ In the USA, HCAI is one of the top ten leading causes of death, impacting 1.7–2 million patients each year with associated costs of \$28–45 billion per year.^{2,3} The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control also reported that the prevalence of HCAI was >7%, accounting for at least 37,000 deaths per year in European countries.^{4,5} Both US and European governmental organizations have developed strategies and policies accordingly to reduce the HCAI incidence and cut down the cost. For example, under the US Affordable Care Act, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is no longer paying for HCAIs. Although substantial preventive efforts

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