

2021 Summary: Virginia Healthcare-Associated Infections (HAI) Advisory Group

The Virginia HAI Advisory Group (VHAG) is a voluntary, statewide, multidisciplinary group that coordinates the efforts of the Commonwealth's HAI stakeholders to align strategies, share information and resources, and produce synergies that will accelerate statewide and individual institutional progress in providing safe, high quality healthcare for Virginia residents by preventing HAIs and antimicrobial resistance (AR).

The group includes persons with expertise in the surveillance, prevention, and control of healthcare-associated infections, including representation from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Health Quality Innovators (HQI), the Virginia Quality Innovation Network – Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO), the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association (VHHA), the Association of Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology – Virginia Chapter (APIC-VA), healthcare providers, infection preventionists, pharmacists, consumers, and physician champions.

This document outlines 2021 work of the Virginia HAI Advisory Group.

2020

Although activities were limited in 2020, the VHAG acted as a resource to maintain connections during the COVID-19 response and served as a communication channel between agencies and among key stakeholders. As such, a summary of 2020 VHAG Annual Accomplishments were not created.

Annual Priority Workgroup - Surgical Site Infections

The VHAG Annual Priority Workgroup focused on abdominal hysterectomy surgical site infections (SSIs) in Virginia hospitals. This workgroup brought together infection preventionists from six hospitals as well as personnel from state agencies and associations to review data, agree on an evaluation tool, and identify risk factors and co-morbidities in SSI cases. Ultimately, the timely work of the Annual Priority Workgroup led to a partnership with Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA) to implement a 4-part educational webinar series (December 2021-March 2022) where state and national experts will cover interventions intended to reduce and/or eliminate SSIs following abdominal hysterectomies.

Operating Procedures and Improved Collaboration

Operating Procedures and Improved Collaboration
VHAG Operating Procedures were updated in 2021 to provide a leadership, general membership and workgroup overview. All VHAG members are requested to maintain a role as a stakeholder and/or as a workgroup member. Each workgroup within the VHAG operates with a tiered participation classification system and they are required to complete an annual priorities proposal to aid in formally documenting plans, goals and accomplishments for the year. View the VHAG Membership infographics.

VHAG successfully piloted the use of SharePoint and MS Teams to create a more collaborative environment for our workgroup members. SharePoint use will be expanded in 2022.

Annual certificates of participation were provided to our members to recognize and appreciate their efforts in our mission to improve health outcomes in Virginia's healthcare settings.

Safe Antibiotics Stewardship Innovators

In the beginning of 2021, the VHAG Safe Antibiotics Stewardship Innovators (SASI) Workgroup recognized a declining SASI membership and engagement of current SASI members. One of our priorities was to re-energize the SASI Workgroup with additional subject matter experts. The SASI members focused their recruitment on pharmacists across multiple settings of care including hospital systems, long-term care and rural hospital pharmacists. These new members were welcomed in November and participated in a deep dive and review of the Antibiotic Use (AU) data for Virginia in preparation for future focused goals for reducing inappropriate antibiotic usage in 2022. The SASI Workgroup supported Antibiotic Awareness Week with a recorded webinar focusing on “Treatment Options for *Candida auris*” presented by Laura Cwengros, PharmD, BCIDP, Infectious Diseases Clinical Manager at CJW Medical Center and Shaina Bernard, PharmD, Antimicrobial Resistance Coordinator, Virginia Department of Health.

Infection Prevention Education Workgroup

The VHAG Infection Prevention (IP) Education Workgroup was newly reinvigorated in June 2021 and has brought together stakeholders from across the public health and healthcare continuum. The VDH HAI/AR Program Project Firstline statewide infection prevention and control (IPC) learning needs assessment was reviewed to determine workgroup priority actions. As such, the VHAG IP Education Workgroup is developing the Virginia Infection Prevention and Control Training Alliance (VICTA). VICTA's mission is to bring together a multitude of IPC educational initiatives to strengthen, streamline, and eliminate redundancy in statewide IPC training. With planning well underway through 2021, the VHAG IP Education Workgroup hopes to go live with a VICTA website in 2022; this website is intended to become the primary collaborative for infection prevention and control training resources and communication in Virginia.

