

2015 SSI Validation

Frequently Asked Questions:

I found an SSI that was already reported to NHSN but had been misclassified (e.g., reported as a superficial SSI, but was actually an organ/space SSI). How do I record this for validation?

For validation purposes, if an SSI was already reported to NHSN but had been misclassified, you should still record “SSI was Reported Correctly.” Correct the mistake in NHSN and examine your surveillance practices to reduce this error in the future.

None of my procedures were flagged by diagnosis codes as having a potential SSI, i.e., I have zero flagged procedures. How do I proceed with validation?

If your hospital performed procedures during the first half of 2015 but no procedures were flagged by the post-operative diagnosis codes, you should review denominator data for 10 randomly selected procedures using the Denominator Data Supplemental Validation Form (“optional form”) on page 14 of the workbook. Report your results via the Results Submission Form.

Note: If using only the optional form for your 2015 SSI validation, record "0" in the right two columns of the “Review of validation process” table on page 15 of the workbook.

My hospital performs few procedures. Can I just review the medical records for all surgical procedures rather than reviewing only the flagged procedures?

Some hospitals may want to review the medical records of all surgical patients to identify or rule out SSI and to review denominator data accuracy. The HAI Program encourages any activities that increase the accuracy of your HAI data. Although this is not the method described in the workbook instructions, you may choose to participate in 2015 SSI validation by performing 100 percent review. Submit your results via the validation submission form, taking care to indicate the number of total procedures performed, the number of flagged procedures, and the number of procedures reviewed. (Note: The total number of procedures performed and the number you reviewed for validation should be the same.)

The denominator data element in the medical record agrees with the data element reported to NHSN. However, when reviewing the medical record for validation, I found other documentation (such as physician/nursing notes or the operative record) that demonstrates what was reported to NHSN is inaccurate. What do I do?

For validation purposes, you may consider the reviewed data to be in agreement. However, you need to use this opportunity to educate the hospital staff responsible that practice changes may be needed to improve data accuracy in the medical record.

Do we run the validation ICD codes for inpatients or outpatients?

Only inpatient surgical procedures are reported to NHSN; your review of ICD procedure codes should only capture inpatient procedures. However, post-operative ICD diagnosis “flag” codes should be generated from any patient visit, in any department, during the 40- or 100-day post-operative follow-up surveillance period.

Is 2015 SSI validation mandatory?

Validation is not mandatory, but hospital participation/non-participation will be noted in the *HAI in California Hospitals Annual Public Report 2015* published on the CDPH HAI Program website. The HAI data reported by hospitals that did not participate in validation will be highlighted in all the data tables and on the HAI interactive map. For some hospitals, this may be an important factor in deciding to participate. Most hospitals will choose to participate because the validation process will help them evaluate and strengthen their SSI surveillance practices.

What if my hospital did not perform [these] surgeries in the first half of 2015?

You should still complete a Results Submission Form. The form will be abbreviated and only require that you identify the hospital, enter contact information and indicate that your hospital did not perform the surgeries. This helps the HAI Program track which hospitals did and did not participate in validation.

How long will it take?

The HAI Program has experience validating NHSN data in hospitals, which has included comprehensive medical record review of suspect HAI. In one past validation, Liaison IPs validated up to 20 CLABSI and SSI records plus LabID events in one day. 2015 SSI Validation will require review of a maximum of 40 records (likely fewer). We therefore do not anticipate the medical chart review process will take longer than two days.

The number of records reviewed will be determined by the procedures “flagged” using the post-operative ICD diagnosis codes. We expect the process of acquiring the list of flagged procedures necessary for validation from your billing department may take days or weeks. We therefore encourage IPs to contact their billing departments early to begin this process.

How will the results be used?

The HAI Program will use validation results (submitted via the online Results Submission Form) to identify hospitals that may need assistance with their SSI surveillance or the validation process. Aggregate results may be made public or presented at stakeholder meetings; hospital-specific data will not be shared.