

# Case Spotlight

## Making a Difference in Nursing Homes: Sepsis



Sepsis is the body's overwhelming and life-threatening response to infection. It affects more than 1 million Americans each year; 258,000 of those people die.<sup>1</sup> Sepsis can lead to tissue damage and organ failure, leaving thousands of survivors with lifelong after-effects.<sup>2</sup> Not all infections develop into sepsis; however, a localized infection can rapidly progress to full-blown sepsis within just hours. In these cases, early recognition and treatment are key to saving lives. Early recognition involves paying attention to a combination of symptoms and signs.

The TMF Health Quality Institute was awarded a two-year Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Civil Monetary Penalty (CMP) project focused on reducing sepsis in nursing homes. Specifically, the purpose of the CMP project is to improve early identification of sepsis in nursing homes in order to decrease the morbidity and mortality associated with severe sepsis and septic shock. The training provided to the nursing homes includes educational strategies, such as onsite education, train-the-trainer education and webinars to maximize the number of nursing home staff members who incorporate the early identification of sepsis into their daily operational and clinical activities. Over two years, TMF will work with a total of 550 nursing homes by using these educational strategies.

### Success Story: How training-the-trainer spreads intervention beyond the nursing home

The CMP Sepsis project uses three strategies for nursing home staff education. One of those strategies is TMF's train-the-trainer, offered to lead clinical staff like Directors of Nursing (DONs) or nurse educators, which provides a comprehensive training curriculum, including all of the tools and resources needed for the lead clinician to effectively train staff. These lead clinical staff take the information and tools provided and educate their nursing home staff. TMF follows up with those lead clinical staff to answer questions and ensure nursing home staff training is scheduled. This sustainable intervention has successfully been implemented in over 200 nursing homes in Texas.

At one facility, the DON reported that after the sepsis training, his friend called him after having a colonoscopy, complaining she was not feeling right. When the DON heard the symptoms, he advised her to go to the emergency room or see her doctor right away. She went to the hospital and was diagnosed with sepsis. Her sepsis onset was early in stage, and she was hospitalized for approximately two days. This DON attributes the sepsis training with his quick recognition of early signs and symptoms of sepsis, allowing his friend to receive the rapid treatment needed to avert progression to severe sepsis and septic shock. For every hour that sepsis goes untreated (without antibiotics), the risk of death increases by 7.6 percent. After this experience, the DON scheduled the training for his staff, knowing firsthand how valuable early recognition of signs and symptoms of sepsis is for saving lives.

**For more information about TMF's CMP Sepsis project, please contact Marlene Kennard, MA, RRT, CPHQ, Quality Improvement Consultant, at [improvesepsis@tmf.org](mailto:improvesepsis@tmf.org), or call 512-677-0712.**

1. Sepsis Alliance: <http://www.sepsis.org/sepsis/definition>

2. Martin SM. Sepsis, severe sepsis and septic shock: changes in incidence, pathogens and outcomes; 2012. *Expert Rev Anti Infect Ther.* 2012;10(6):701-706.