

Background

A 150-bed hospital in a semi-rural region struggled to provide consistent Infectious Disease (ID) coverage. With no ID specialist on staff and only periodic locum tenens support, the hospital faced challenges in managing complex infections, monitoring antibiotic use, meeting CMS quality benchmarks, and delivering post-discharge continuity of care.

The Challenge

- 1. Limited ID Access:** Patients with sepsis, resistant infections, and HIV/AIDS were often transferred out, delaying care and increasing costs.
- 2. Antibiotic Overuse:** Without formal stewardship oversight, antibiotics were frequently overprescribed, driving resistance trends and higher pharmacy costs.
- 3. Staff Burden:** Hospitalists and ED physicians carried the responsibility of managing infectious disease cases outside their specialty expertise.
- 4. Compliance Risks:** The hospital lacked a formal Antibiotic Stewardship Program, threatening accreditation readiness.

The STeM Solution: Tele-ID with Antibiotic Stewardship Support

The hospital partnered with **Specialist TeleMed (STeM)** to implement a comprehensive **Tele-Infectious Disease program**, which included antibiotic stewardship oversight.

Key Features of the Solution:

- **24/7 Virtual ID Coverage:** Board-certified infectious disease physicians available on demand and for daily rounds.
- **Antibiotic Stewardship Rounds:** Led by STeM's Tele-ID specialists, weekly case reviews with pharmacy and clinical staff were held to ensure appropriate antimicrobial use.
- **Rapid Consults:** ED and inpatient teams could request Tele-ID consults in real time via Andor Health's integrated platform, with seamless EMR documentation.
- **Outpatient Continuity of Care:** Oversight of post-discharge care plans and management of Outpatient Parenteral Antimicrobial Therapy (OPAT).
- **Dedicated POD of Physicians:** A small, consistent team of six Tele-ID specialists built trust and familiarity with hospital staff and processes.

Results

Results from the first year of implementation were positive, which include:

- **Reduced Transfers:** ID-related transfers decreased by 43%, keeping patients in-house.
- **Improved Outcomes:** Sepsis mortality dropped by 14% due to earlier intervention and evidence-based treatment.
- **Pharmacy Savings:** Antibiotic costs decreased by 21% through stewardship oversight.
- **Compliance Achieved:** The hospital successfully implemented a CMS-compliant Antibiotic Stewardship Program and improved its Leapfrog grade.
- **Staff Confidence:** Physicians reported increased comfort managing complex cases with real-time ID support.

Hospital Testimonial

“STeM’s Tele-Infectious Disease services have been a game changer for our hospital. Not only are our patients receiving timely and expert ID care, but the stewardship program has saved us money and ensured compliance with national standards.”
— Chief of Medicine

Why STeM

- **Comprehensive ID Coverage:** From post-op infections and sepsis management to post-discharge clinic coverage.
- **Antibiotic Stewardship Expertise:** Structured oversight that reduces resistance and costs.
- **Dedicated POD Model:** Consistent Tele-ID physicians who know the hospital’s staff and workflows.
- **Proven ROI:** Hospitals often recapture the cost of Tele-ID programs within the first few months through reduced transfers and pharmacy savings.

Conclusion

By partnering with STeM, the hospital transformed its Infectious Disease program from reactive to proactive. The combination of **virtual ID consults** and a **structured antibiotic stewardship program** not only improved patient care but also reduced costs and ensured compliance, demonstrating the power of specialty telemedicine in today’s healthcare environment.

Contact Specialist TeleMed to learn more about the benefits of implementing a Tele-ID program.