

In response to an article appearing in The New York Times April 28, 2014, *A Deadly Fungus and Questions at a Hospital*, The Association for Linen Management (ALM) provides this additional information on healthcare laundry and linen services, their safety and mechanisms for oversight.

The situation in Louisiana was undoubtedly a tragedy. It is also, thankfully, an extremely rare occurrence. The ever-increasing abundance of emerging infections provide the greatest threat to the health of fragile patients. Mucormycosis (also called zygomycosis) is a rare infection, unfortunately fragile patients such as these very sick young children and immunocompromised patients are highly susceptible to such illnesses.

Used/contaminated healthcare textiles can be a source of pathogens however, with compliance to industry guidelines tragedies such as this are rare. The Louisiana occurrence was a situation where everything that could go wrong did go wrong... and lives were lost. Hundreds of healthcare laundries provide hygienically clean linens to hospitals on a daily basis, providing millions of pounds of quality textile products. Oversight of laundry services is provided in three ways; the third added after the tragedy in Louisiana.

- The hospital-based [On-Premise/OPL] laundry and many cooperative laundries are accredited along with their owner hospital by one of three deemed national accrediting organizations:
 - The Joint Commission
 - Det Norske Veritas [DNV]
 - The Healthcare Facilities Accreditation Program [HFAP].
- In addition, in all but three states there are also state hospital licensing authorities that inspect hospitals on an annual unannounced basis. They inspect for compliance with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services [CMS] standards of participation and any additional statutes developed by the specific state. These inspections also include the OPL and many cooperative laundries.
- The CMS now requires in their standards [CMS CoP § 482.12(e)] that when a hospital contracts patient care services, *including but not limited to laundry services*, the hospitals governing body is responsible to ensure that the contractor of those services furnishes them in a manner that will ensure compliance with all applicable conditions of participation & standards for the contracted services.

Adherence to sound practice such as the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens regulations and voluntary standards such as the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation AAMI/ANSI ST65 contributes to the industries longstanding reputation for quality. Other voluntary standards frequently adopted by state statute that address infection control and healthcare textiles include the NFPA Life Safety Code 101 and the Facility Guidelines Institute (formerly AIA); these are typically enforced when adopted by the individual state for compliance along with other state developed guidance.

“Through compliance with these practices and proper oversight by responsible parties, hygienically clean healthcare textiles will continue to provide a safe healing environment” said ALM President Randy Wendland, CLLM. The Association for Linen Management is a non-profit trade association advancing excellence in the textile care industry ALM provides training for laundry processors, linen distribution and guidance for the healthcare customers they serve.

For additional information contact: **Linda Fairbanks, Executive Director / 859-624-0177**