



Northern California
Pediatric Specialty Care
Orthopedics, Burns, Cleft Lip
and Palate, Spinal Cord Injury

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Comment letter for HCAI Pediatric Quality Indicators for California Hospitals, 2022

Shriners Children's Northern California is committed to providing the highest quality of care to children with complex diagnoses. The Pediatric Burn Center at Shriners Children's Northern California is verified by the American Burn Association (ABA) and has 3 former ABA Presidents on staff. The Pediatric Burn program is the busiest program in the state of California and serves children throughout the western states, Canada and Mexico. The majority of patients with the most acute and complex large burns are patients from international communities. These patients often have had delayed treatment during the most critical first hours of their traumatic injuries, putting them at much higher risk of life-threatening complications such as infections and sepsis.

The results displayed for Shriners Children's Northern California in the HCAI Pediatric Quality Indicators for Postoperative Sepsis reflect patients arriving at Shriners with complications that could have been prevented with rapid access to a pediatric burn center. Burn patients have a high sepsis incidence because they have lost the skin, which is the primary barrier to infection. Patients with major burn injuries also have compromised immune function, which makes them susceptible to infection. All of the 7 cases identified in 2022 were acute traumatic large burns; 6 patients were from Mexico. The need for transport with large open wounds exposes children to environmental pathogens. Those 6 patients were admitted to the Shriners Burn Center with an average of 45% total body surface area, 3rd degree burns and an average admission date of 3 days after their injury. By contrast, patients in the Sacramento region are able to access critical burn treatment within hours of initial injury. If these patients were excluded, the Postoperative Sepsis data would reflect performance at better than average levels (less than 1.0%).

Any review of the published data needs to take these factors into account when making comparisons to non-burn hospitals as well as international transports.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenny Pawlek".

Kenny Pawlek, MS, MBA, FACHE
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