

HPN pay poll: Infection control professionals earn 4.9% salary increase

by Curt Werner

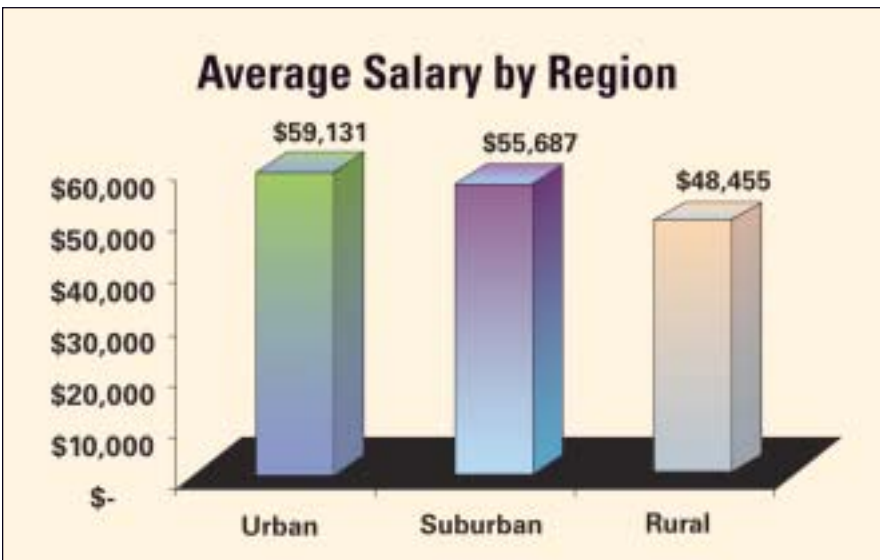
The overall earnings of men and women employed in infection control increased by 4.9 percent in 2003 over 2002, an average increase that outstripped the pay raises earned this year in many healthcare fields. The rise in average salaries amounted to an increase above the generally acknowledged national average of about 3 percent. That's the results revealed by the exclusive 2003 *Healthcare Purchasing News* survey of infection control personnel salaries, the third year that *HPN* has looked at the infection control community's pay.

Respondents to the e-mail sampling of *HPN* readers, 74 percent of whom said they received a pay increase this year, earn an average salary of \$57,660 in 2003, up from the \$53,938 reported in the 2002 survey ("Plumper paychecks for infection control personnel," *HPN*, September 2002, pg. 12). This year, 140 members of the infection control profession, mostly based in hospitals, responded to the *HPN* survey, which was taken during July and should be considered unscientific. About two-thirds of respondents said they work in not-for-profit hospitals, about the same as reported in the 2002 *HPN* survey. The average size of the hospitals was 300 beds, higher than



last year's average of a 258-bed facility. In this year's survey 31 percent of respondents said they were infection control coordinators, 26 percent infection control practitioners, 19 percent infection control nurses, and 11 percent either infection control managers or directors.

Just as it did last year, the base salary didn't tell the entire story about infection control personnel pay. Not only did three-fourths of the survey respondents say they expected and received a raise this year, nearly four out of five (79 percent) survey participants said they also picked up a bonus as part of their 2003 annual compensation. This figure is about the same as the 78 percent who reported earning a bonus in 2002. The average bonus this year came in at \$1,100.



Closing of the gender gap

It is certainly no surprise that the infection control community continues to have many more women than men, a fact born out again in this year's *HPN* survey. In 2002, fully 85 percent of survey participants were women. This year, that trend accelerated slightly with 89 percent female participants, a statistic that generally mirrors most of the professional estimates. Despite the fractional number of men in infection control positions, the bigger gender news is that women's salaries in this year's survey overtook the pay of their male colleagues. In the 2002 survey, men

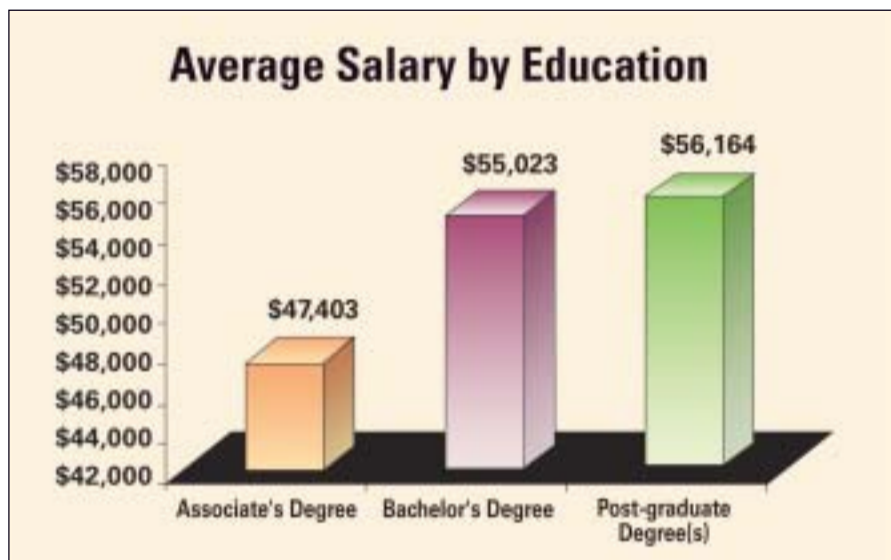
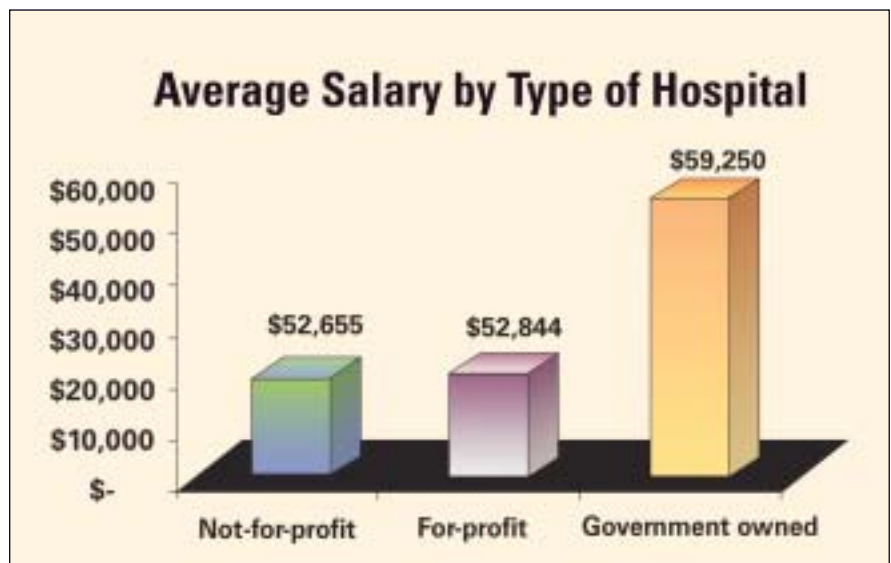
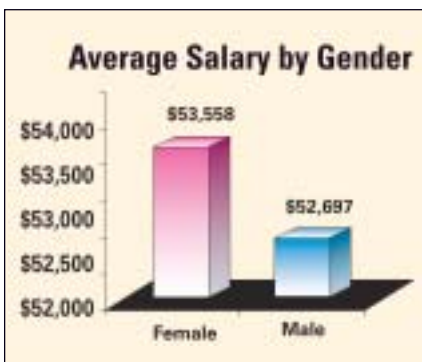
in infection control took home an average of \$60,714 compared with the average pay of \$52,974 for women. But this year revealed a reversal of fortune. Women averaged \$53,557 while men lagged behind at \$52,697 this time around.

Most infection control professionals male and female alike continue to feel reasonably secure about their positions in their hospitals, which generally is more than most healthcare workers can say. This year, 53 percent of respondents said they feel "very secure" and another 41 percent answering "somewhat secure" about their jobs in 2003. That compares favorably with the 2002 opinions on that subject when 46 percent said they felt "very secure" and another 50 percent said they felt "somewhat secure."

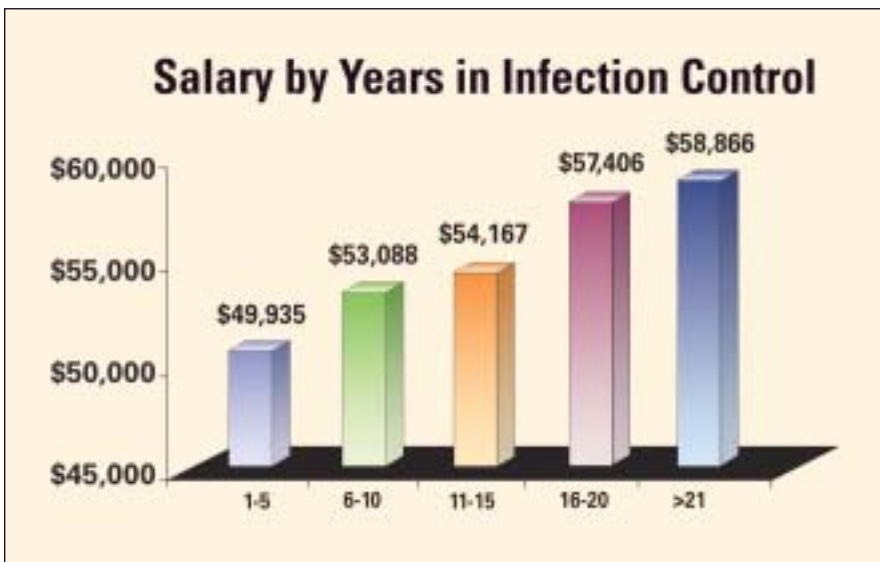
As it does in real estate, location makes a difference in infection control salaries. For the second year in a row, survey respondents who work in urban hospitals were paid more than their colleagues in suburban and rural facilities. The average salary of urban infection control professionals this year was \$59,131 (compared with \$58,643 last year), while suburban professionals were paid an average of \$55,687 this year (down slightly from \$55,821 in 2002). Rural workers took home an average of \$48,455 in 2003 compared with \$48,987 last year.

Regionally, the story changed somewhat in 2003, although in both years personnel on the West Coast enjoyed the highest average salaries. Infection control professionals in the Pacific states earned an average of \$62,688 (\$62,172 in 2002), followed by those in the Mountain states with an average of \$59,944 (\$52,630 last year). Overall salaries averaged \$52,408 this year in the Northeast (\$4,048 in 2002), \$52,313 in the Central states (\$50,996 in 2002) and \$51,241 in the Southeast (\$2,268 last year).

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Another factor in pay is education in a well-educated group. All infection control professionals who participated in this year's survey hold at least an associate's degree. More than half (54 percent) hold bachelor's degrees, while 23 percent hold post-graduate degrees. Not surprisingly, the more education the higher the salary, but not by much. Those with post-graduate degrees currently earn an average of \$56,164, while those with bachelor's degrees take home an average of \$55,023. Holders of associate's degrees earn an average of \$47,403 according to this year's survey results. The spread was much smaller in 2003 than it was in 2002 when each category was separated by about \$7,000.

The vast majority (86 percent) of infection control professionals who participated in this year's survey are registered nurses with licenses spread fairly evenly among the remainder. Approximately three-fourths of respondents are in it alone, working as the sole infection control professional in their hospital. In their infection control departments, most survey respondents report to either directors of quality or risk management (36 percent) or to vice presidents or directors of nursing (31 percent). Thirteen percent report to the hospital's CEO, and the average survey participant has worked at their hospital for 14 years. **HPN**