

Mastering old challenges with new alliances – how to breathe life in the amendments to the federal regulations for infection control in Germany

Alte Herausforderungen mit neuen Allianzen meistern – Wege zur Umsetzung des Infektionsschutzänderungsgesetzes in Deutschland

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Editorial

Recently, amendments to the federal regulations for infection control in Germany (Infektionsschutzänderungsgesetz) have passed the legislative. This act, as part of the German strategy against antimicrobial resistance (Deutsche Antibiotika Resistenz Strategie, DART), is an important step for the regulative base of infection prevention in Germany, as it provides the legal structures needed to master the challenges by nosocomial infections and multiresistant organisms. An act however can only provide the legal framework for concrete solutions. History has shown that such solutions require more than the political will, but in fact people with motivation, ability and the necessary resources to breathe life into the articles of the act.

This issue of “GMS Krankenhaushygiene Interdisziplinär” encircles a wide area of current problems in hospital hygiene from so-far neglected risks in endoscopy to anaesthesiology and the treatment of chronic wounds to skin care but has a special focus on multiresistant organisms (MRO), one of the greatest challenge of medicine worldwide.

While problems with bacterial resistances are a global threat, solutions for such problems have to concern the regional players in health care and their individual interests. Over the last couple of years, networks of health care providers have formed in Germany as well as other European countries to bring together those who are willing to battle nosocomial infections and MRO. Some of these

networks have been supported by federal grants in Germany since. HICARE (Gesundheitsregion Ostseeküste), the Health Region Baltic Sea Coast, is one of the biggest of those networks, as it brings together more than 40 partners from research, business, and health care in their efforts to jointly battle MROs (Figure 1). This network is funded by a total sum of over 16 million Euros in research grants by the German Federal Ministry of Research and Education, the State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and grants given by the participating hospitals and registered doctors, health care institutions, health insurances and medical industry. However, as stated above, more than money is needed for a successful battle against MROs. A relevant part of the manuscripts in this issue are based on presentations held on the HICARE-kick-off-workshop in spring 2011 as well as the current research output of the project's six research fields (Figure 2). Beside the scientific output, one of the maybe most important, but modest, results of this project is that stakeholders from all over research, business, and health care have agreed to one joint mission statement that sets the basic principles for all partners despite of their individual, and sometimes conflicting, interests (Figure 3).

The next steps will be to underlay the project with more practical results and at the same time involve other regions and partners into the network. So, this issue is an invitation to collaborate and make the efforts against MRO international, too.

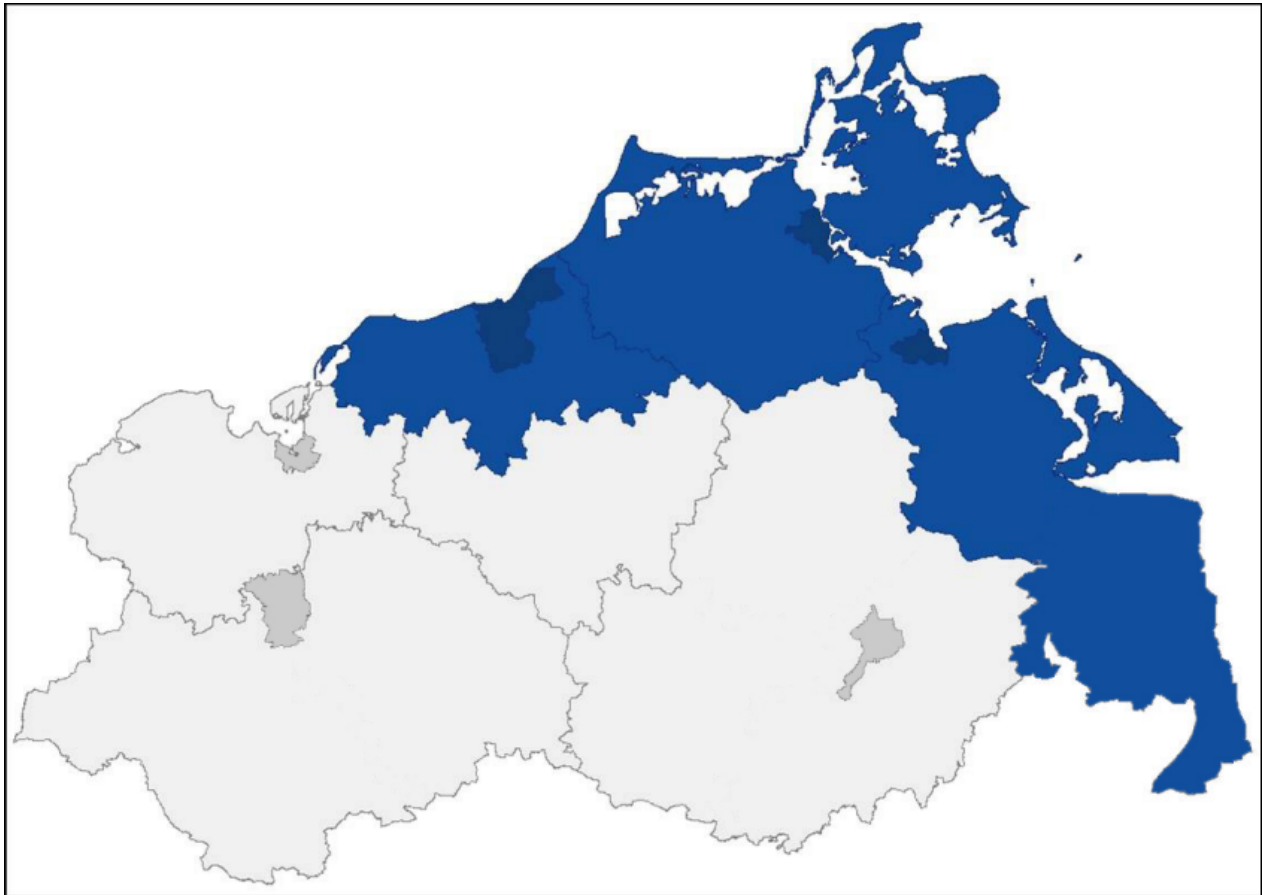


Figure 1: A map of “HICARE-Gesundheitsregion Ostseeküste”

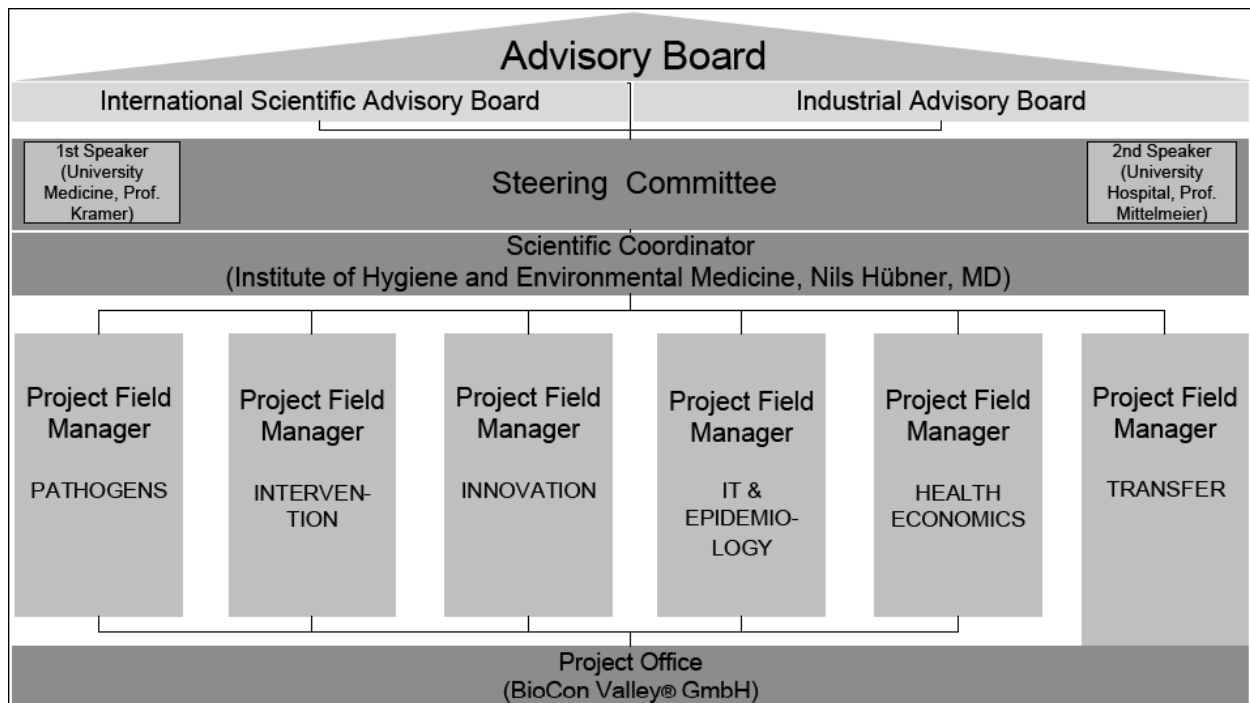


Figure 2: Organization chart of the HICARE network



**Joint mission statement of the project partners in
HICARE – Aktionsbündnis gegen multiresistente Erreger (Coalition against multi-resistant organisms)**

The Gesundheitsregion Ostseeküste (Baltic Coast Healthcare Region) (HICARE) regards itself as a model for Germany in demonstrating how the spread of multi-resistant organisms (MROs) can be successfully checked by taking a regional approach. On this topic, the project partners are unanimously of the opinion that

- MROs are a major social problem. Solving this problem will require close cooperation in partnership with healthcare providers, health researchers and the healthcare industry under the aegis of politicians.
- Related medical, pharmaceutical, logistical, technical and economic issues will have to be simultaneously dealt with if MRO are to be successfully managed in the long term.
- Inter-institutional and cross-sectoral concepts involving stationary and ambulant medical, therapeutic and nursing care will be required to achieve this solution.
- Measures to reduce colonisation and selection pressure through the rational use of antibiotics, early diagnosis, and therapies adapted to the specific organisms must be prioritized above secondary and tertiary measures.
- The magnitude of the MRO problem must be adequately reflected in systems of remuneration for healthcare services. Misallocations and misdirected incentives must be eliminated.
- A lack of evidence cannot be a reason for failing to provide care. Where there is a lack of scientific data, it must be generated. Until it is, standards must be based on risk evaluation and expert knowledge.

The project partners therefore declare their willingness to actively participate in establishing and implementing a comprehensive, proactive and cross-sectoral hygiene and infection prevention scheme in the Gesundheitsregion Ostseeküste. This will include in particular;

- initiating and participating in research projects and studies so as to expand the evidence base and close knowledge gaps.
- developing comprehensive, consistent standards for treatments using antimicrobial chemotherapeutics and for the management, and in particular for the prevention, diagnosis, therapy and sharing of information in cases of MRO.
- providing advanced and further training for specialist staff and information to those affected.

This declaration expresses the conviction of the undersigned that a model solution for Germany will only be achieved through joint, patient-oriented action.

Since this is a social problem, it will not be solved by medical science alone.

The partners therefore declare their willingness to actively tackle this problem, working together with political actors, including beyond the project's immediate scope, and to promote the overall conditions necessary to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable solution.

Figure 3: Joint mission statement of the HICARE project partners

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