

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) Update, Quarter 4 of 2020/21

August 18, 2021

Summary Table

	Current quarter (Q4 2020/21)	Previous quarter (Q3 2020/21)	Same quarter of previous year (Q4 2019/20)	Last 4 Quarters (Q1 – Q4 2020/21)
Total new MRSA cases identified*	625	472	641	2,042
Number of new MRSA cases associated with the reporting facility	269	211	307	921
Total inpatient days	909,376	685,506	951,686	2,862,618
Rate of MRSA associated with the reporting facility per 10,000 inpatient days (95% CI)	3.0 (2.6-3.3)	3.1 (2.7-3.5)	3.2 (2.9-3.6)	3.2 (3.0-3.4)

Highlights for Q4 of 2020/21

- The provincial rate of new MRSA cases associated with the reporting facility in Q4 of 2020/21 was 3.0 per 10,000 inpatient days.
- The MRSA rate in Q4 of 2020/21 was not statistically significantly different from the previous quarter (3.1 in Q3 of 2020/21) and the same quarter of the previous year (3.2 in Q4 of 2019/20).
- There is a significant downward trend in the provincial rate of MRSA from Q1 of 2016/17 to Q4 of 2020/21 (Figure 1).

What is Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)?

MRSA is a type of *Staph* bacteria that has become resistant to many antibiotics and is thus more difficult to treat. MRSA often lives on the skin or in the nose of healthy people without causing symptoms (this is called colonization). It can, however, cause infections to the skin and other body sites. Most infections are minor, such as pimples and boils. Serious infections, such as severe wound infections, pneumonia, or septicaemia (infection in the bloodstream) can result in life-threatening illness or, if left untreated, death. Those with weakened immune systems and chronic illnesses are more susceptible to developing an infection.

How is MRSA transmitted?

MRSA is primarily spread by skin-to-skin contact or through contact with surfaces contaminated with the bacteria. About 1 in every 20 people in the community carry MRSA. People who carry MRSA but do not have signs of infection can spread the bacteria to others. It has been shown to spread easily in health care settings; therefore, hospital patients and residents in long-term care facilities are at a higher risk of acquiring MRSA.

How can MRSA transmission be prevented?

Clean your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub (sanitizer); do not share personal items; cover your wounds or cuts with clean, dry bandages until healed; and wash used sheets, towels, and clothes with warm water and laundry detergent. The spread of MRSA can be prevented in health care settings through infection prevention and control measures such as contact precautions, careful cleaning and disinfection of patient areas and medical equipment, and good hand hygiene practice by all staff, including physicians, nurses and other health care workers.

* A health authority modified reporting of MRSA surveillance data to PICNet from Q1 of 2019/20 and onwards, such that only the MRSA cases that were associated with the facilities in their health authority were reported to PICNet. The changes have no effect on the number and rate of MRSA associated with the reporting facility, however it may affect the total MRSA cases reported.

Why is MRSA being monitored in BC hospitals?

MRSA bacteria have many virulence factors that enable them to cause disease. For example, MRSA is a cause of health care-associated bloodstream and catheter-related infections. MRSA is also a common cause of community-associated infections, especially skin and soft tissue infections, and can also cause necrotizing pneumonia. Active surveillance (e.g., screening of high-risk individuals) can identify patients colonized with MRSA so that precautions can be taken to prevent transmission to other patients.

Where can I find information about MRSA in BC?

The PICNet website (www.picnet.ca) provides provincial guidance, toolkits, and related resources for the prevention and control of MRSA and other antimicrobial organisms, as well as the surveillance protocol and reports on MRSA in BC. If you have questions or suspect that you have MRSA, please contact your doctor or healthcare provider.

About this report

This quarterly update presents the latest data on the incidence and trends of healthcare-associated (HCA) cases of MRSA that were newly identified among inpatients in the last five years. In the following graphs,

- 1) MRSA cases that were associated with another health care facility, community-associated, or of unknown origin were not included.
- 2) The data were aggregated by fiscal quarter for each health authority except Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), which aggregated the data by calendar quarter.
- 3) The time frame of each fiscal quarter varied by fiscal year. Generally, there were more days in the fourth fiscal quarter (Q4) than in the other three quarters (Q1, Q2, and Q3) of each fiscal year.
- 4) The line in each graph represents the overall linear trend over time.
- 5) Direct comparison of the number of cases or the rate between health authorities is not recommended due to variations in case finding strategies and the application of MRSA case classification for surveillance among the health authorities. Please refer to the most recent annual surveillance report at <https://www.picnet.ca/surveillance/> for more details of the data limitations.

Figure 1. Provincial rate and number of new cases of MRSA associated with the reporting facility, by fiscal year and quarter, 2016/17 - 2020/21, British Columbia

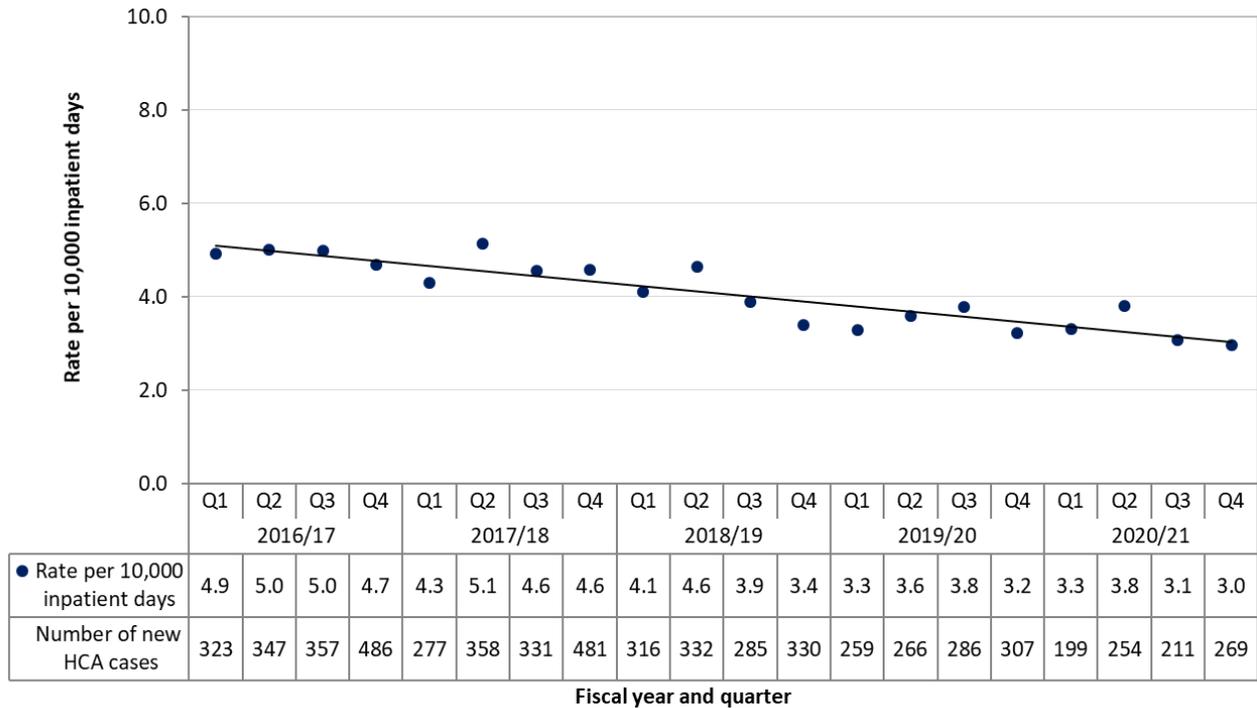


Figure 2. Rate and number of new cases of MRSA associated with the reporting facility, by fiscal year and quarter, 2016/17 - 2020/21, Interior Health

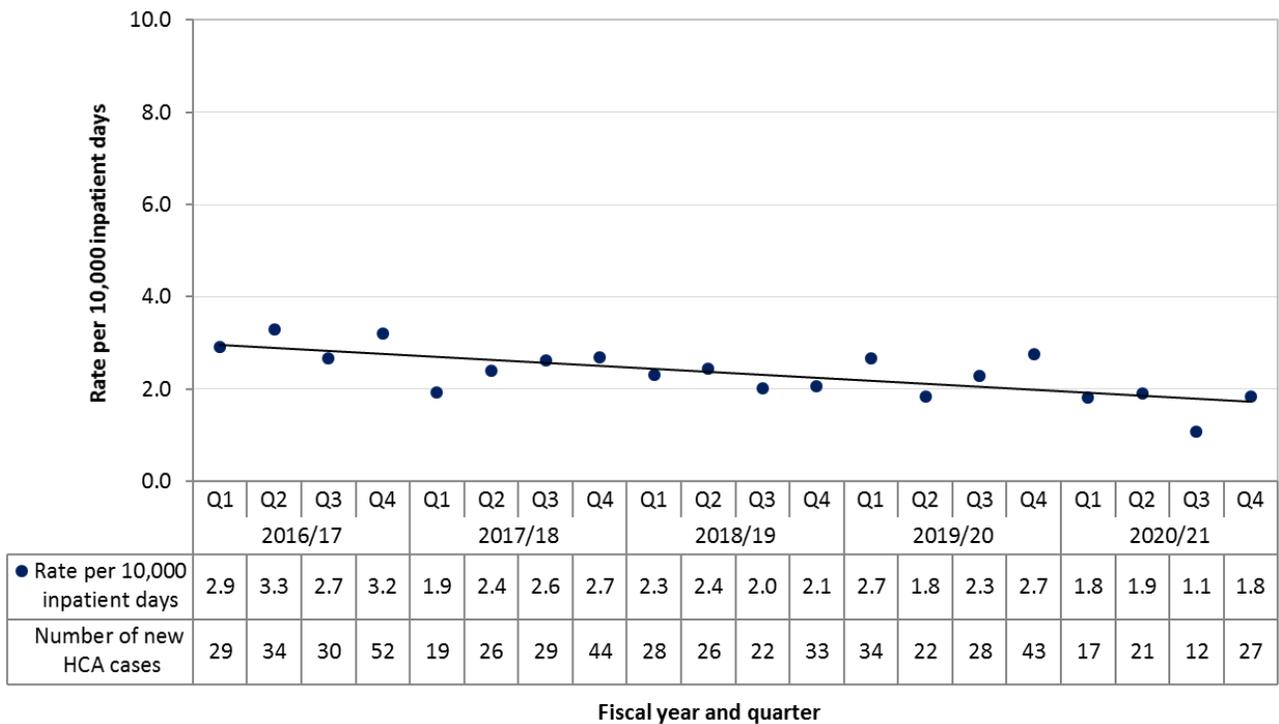


Figure 3. Rate and number of new cases of MRSA associated with the reporting facility, by fiscal year and quarter, 2016/17 - 2020/21, Fraser Health¹

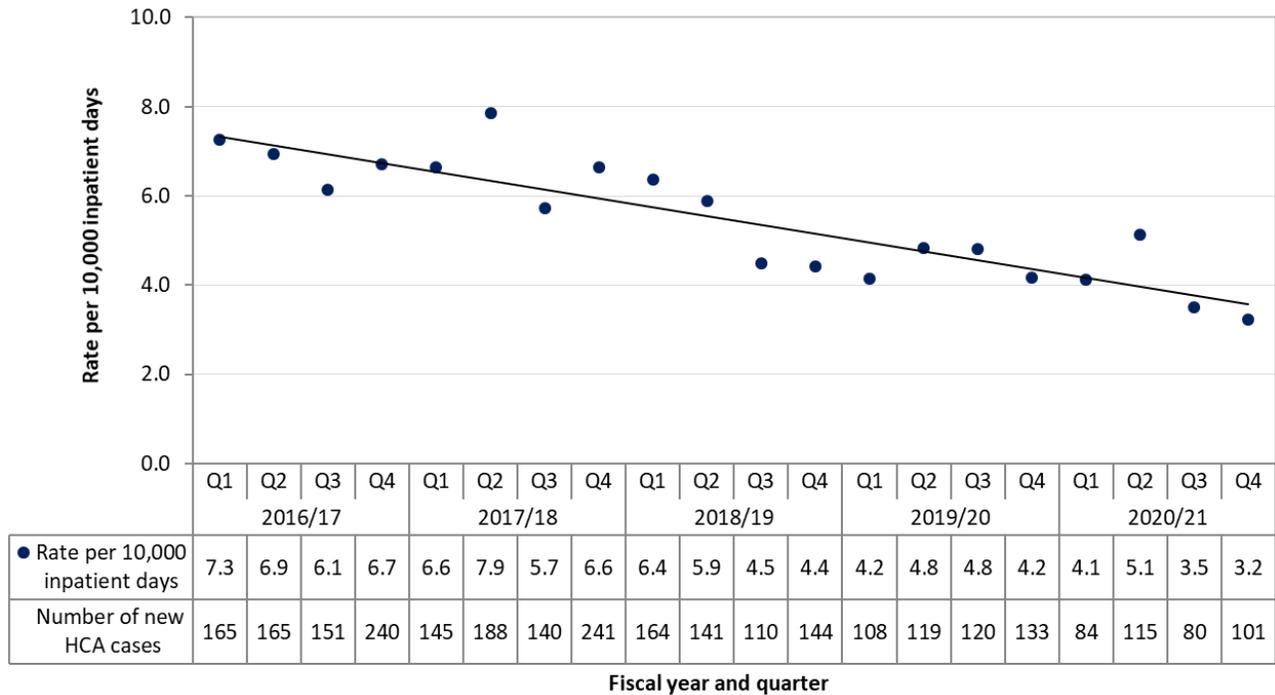
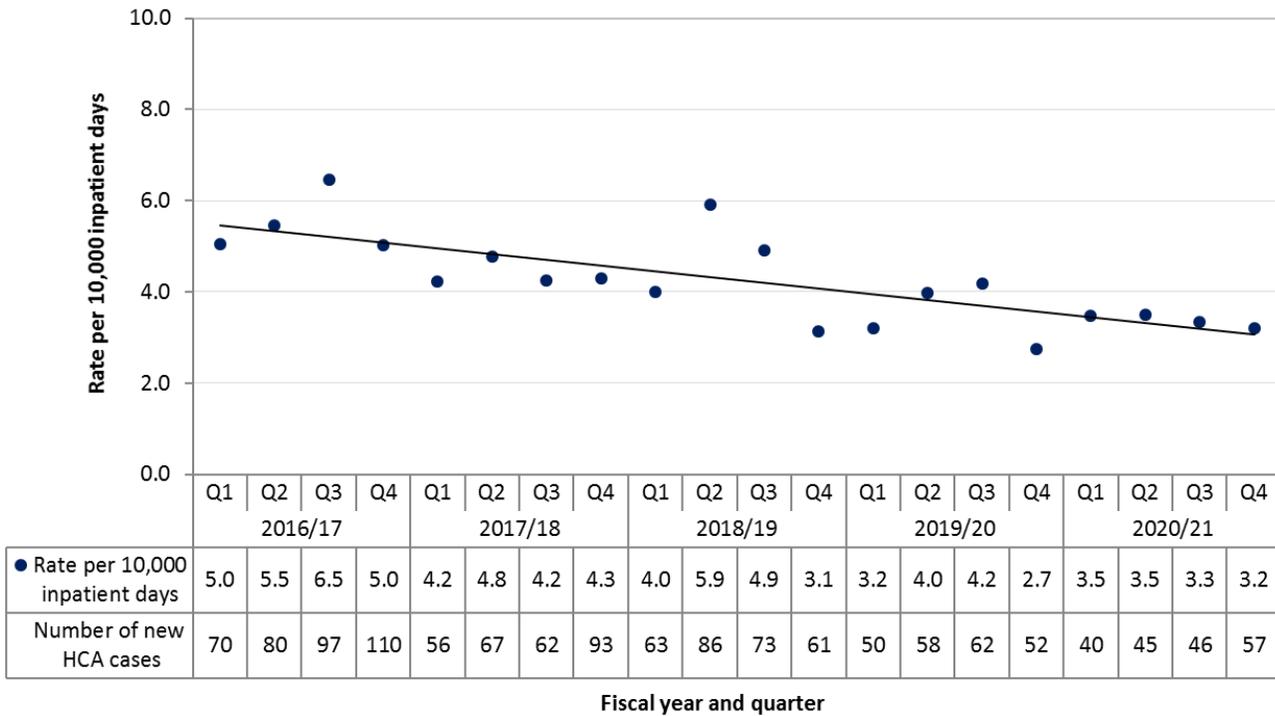


Figure 4. Rate and number of new cases of MRSA associated with the reporting facility, by fiscal year and quarter, 2016/17 - 2020/21, Vancouver Coastal Health²



¹ Fraser Health expanded its surveillance program for MRSA to a new acute care site during Q4 2017/18 and another new acute care site during Q4 2018/19.

² Data from acute care facilities of Providence Health Care (PHC) were included.

Figure 5. Rate and number of new cases of MRSA associated with the reporting facility, by fiscal year and quarter, 2016/17 - 2020/21, Island Health³

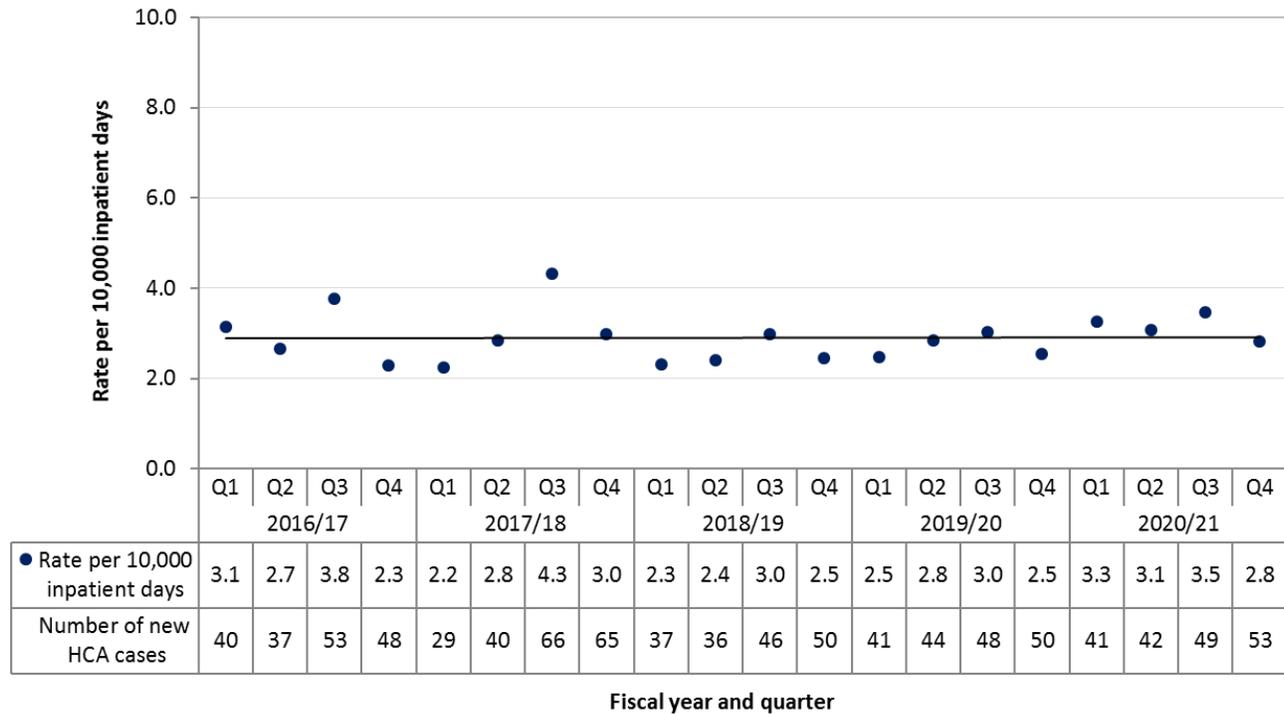
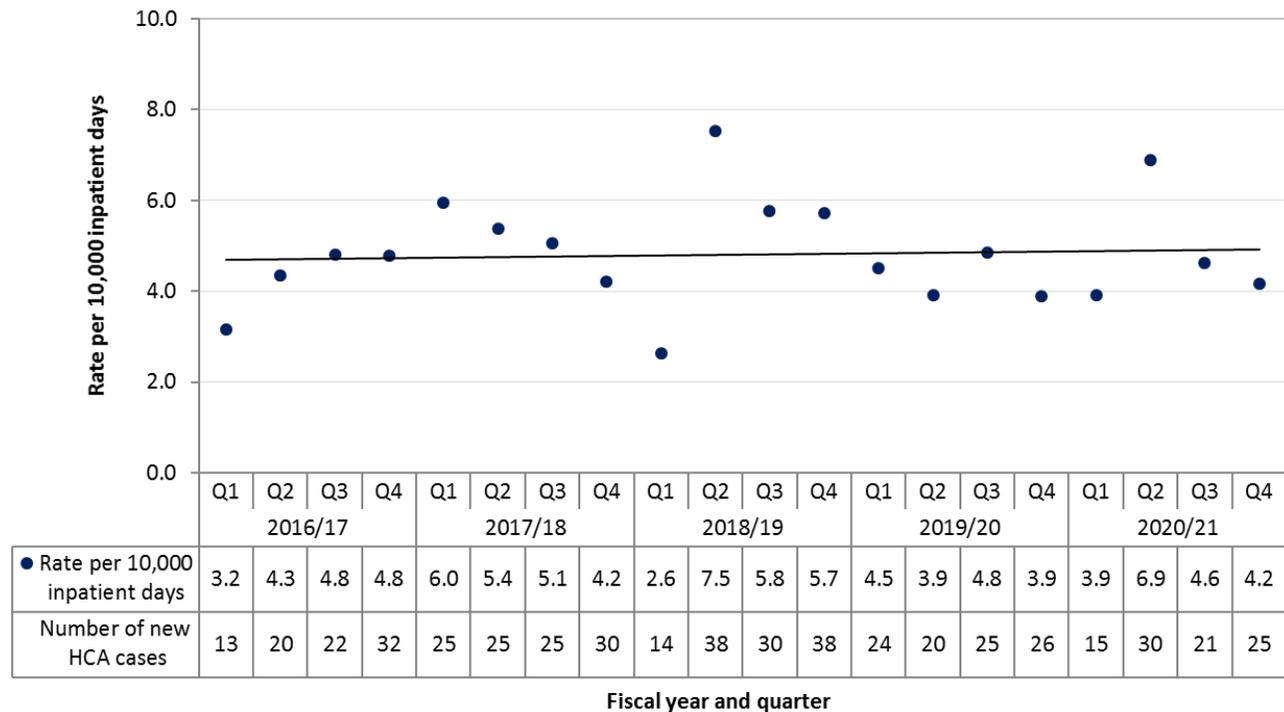
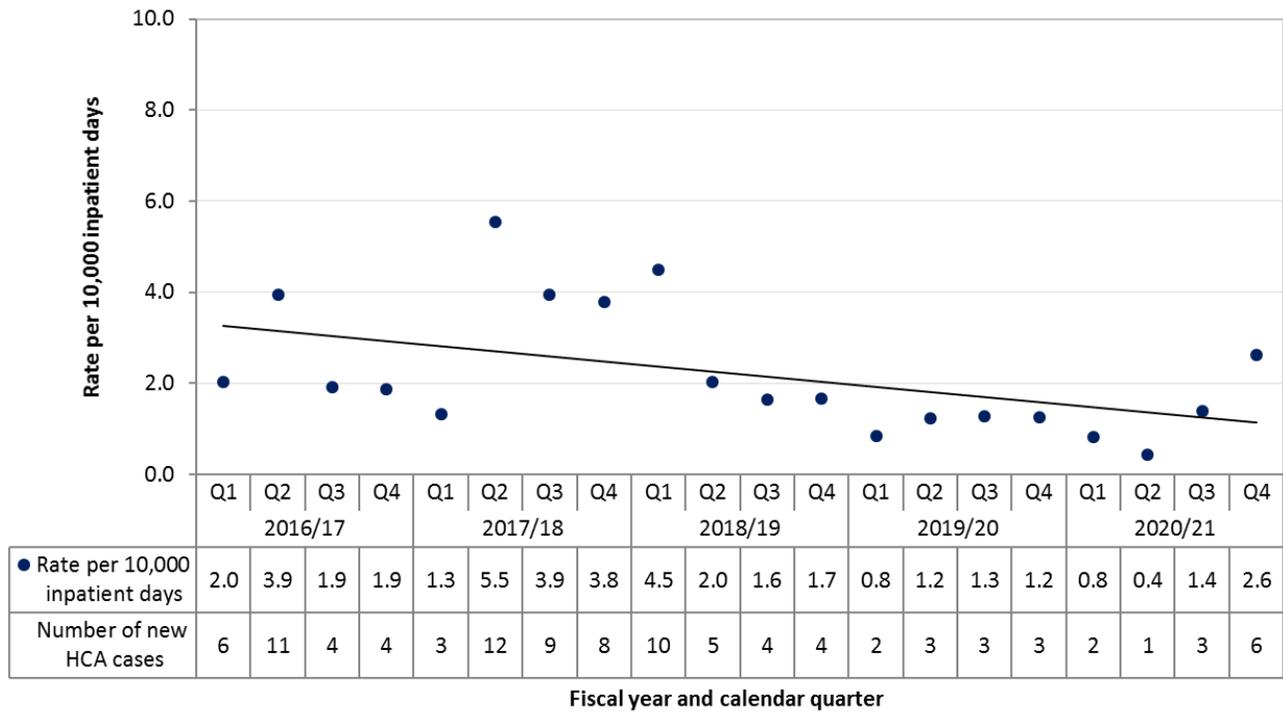


Figure 6. Rate and number of new cases of MRSA associated with the reporting facility, by fiscal year and quarter, 2016/17 - 2020/21, Northern Health



³ Data include two new hospitals opened during Q3 of 2017/18 and historical data from two closed hospitals.

Figure 7. Rate and number of new cases of MRSA associated with the reporting facility, by fiscal year and calendar quarter, 2016/17 - 2020/21, Provincial Health Services Authority⁴



⁴ Data from BC Cancer - Vancouver were included from Q1 of 2018/19.

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