Patients go to the hospital in the hope of getting better, not worse. But thousands of patients die each year because they contracted an infection while they were in the hospital. A **study** published this month in the highly respected **Archives of Internal Medicine** reports that hospital-acquired infections affect 1.7 million hospitalizations each year. Specifically, hospital-acquired sepsis and pneumonia kill approximately 48,000 patients per year.

Those infections are tragic, expensive, and preventable. A Washington, D.C., research organization called **Resources for the Future** reports that hospital-acquired sepsis and pneumonia are frequently caused by the failure of hospitals to ensure a sterile environment. And the infections don't just affect sick or weak patients; even healthy patients going into the hospital for routine procedures are at risk. This study is conservative in that it looked only at sepsis and pneumonia. The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** estimates that a staggering 98,000 deaths per year are caused by hospital-acquired infections.