

The Role of the Infection Preventionist

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Basics of Infection Prevention
Healthcare-Associated Infections Program
Center for Health Care Quality
California Department of Public Health



Objectives

- Describe the role of infection preventionists (IP) in health care
- Discuss relationships important to success in performing the IP roles

Unique Role of the IP

“There are two pieces that are unique to what IPs and healthcare epidemiologists bring to the table: Data --- knowing what is happening in your institution --- and the knowledge of what needs to be done to prevent infections. Those are the reasons people will invite you when discussing problems related to healthcare safety --- because its something the others don't know. It's what gives us the power.”

Denise Cardo, MD, Director
CDC's Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion

What is the Role of the IP?

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PREVENTION!

Historical Perspective

What we did

- IP typically
 - Reviewed CDC guidelines on HAI prevention
 - Educated staff, mainly nursing, on the guidelines
 - Performed HAI surveillance
 - Reported findings to Infection Control and Executive Committees
 - Reported “successes” to The Joint Commission

Historical Perspective

And What Happened

- Many thousands of patients developed HAI
- Many HAI were device-associated
- Hospital policies and procedures did not reflect actual clinical practices

Current Perspective on HAI Prevention

- HAI harm patients
- Most HAI can be prevented
- Consumers aware of HAI impact
- Demand for accountability by regulatory agencies, advocacy groups, and legislative mandates
- Infection PREVENTION has become a **clear mandate**

**It takes a village,
(the entire health care team)
to prevent HAI**

IP Roles and Tools for HAI Prevention



Professional Standards for IP

- Professional accountability
 - Acquire and maintain knowledge and skills
 - Attend educational conferences
 - Join professional organizations (e.g., APIC, SHEA)
- Qualifications for hospital-based IP
 - Baccalaureate in nursing, microbiology, or epidemiology preferred
 - Basic training (e.g., IP fundamentals course)
 - Knowledge, experience, willingness to work hard, listen, and question

IP as Evaluator

- Review annual risk assessment
 - Update Infection prevention plan
 - Participate in unit rounding
 - Nursing units, OR, GI lab, radiology, ED, clinics
 - Perform surveillance
 - Evaluate staff adherence to HAI prevention care practices
 - Organize data collection to understand what is actually going on
 - Investigate suspected outbreaks
 - Educate based on prevention needs and problems
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IP as HAI Prevention Expert

- Analyze, interpret, and feedback surveillance data
 - Know current evidence-based (CDC) HAI prevention practices
 - Regularly review HAI surveillance findings with healthcare providers and leadership
 - Identify areas for prevention focus
 - Spur new prevention efforts
 - Measure HAI prevention progress over time
 - Provide encouragement to continue efforts when prevention success occurs or stalls
 - Look for new ways to attain and sustain prevention
 - Feedback data to improve performance
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IP as Consultant and Influencer

- Construction
- Device Selection
- Floods, Fires
- Family/Visitor Issues
- Dietary, EVS, Lab
- Pet Therapy
- Pandemic!!
- And more.....

Influence: the capacity or power of persons or things to be a compelling force on or produce effects on the actions, behavior, opinions, etc., of others

**IP have influence –
use it to keep patients, staff, and visitors safe**

IP as Educator

- Educate all health care provider groups
 - Evidence-based infection prevention practices
 - Infection risk, prevention, and control methods
 - Annual Bloodborne Pathogens and Aerosolized Transmissible Diseases (ATD) classes
 - Updates on Influenza, vaccine preventable diseases, emerging infections
- Ensure visitors educated
- Offer community-based classes
 - The public likes to hear what IP have to say

IP as Collaborator

- It is ALL about relationships – with your EVS Director, OR Supervisor, Chief Engineer, Marketing staff, Materials Management, Lab Director
 - What can you learn from their expertise?
 - Where is teamwork a part the solving a problem?
 - Respect and acknowledgment go both ways
- IP collaborate during disasters, outbreaks, community projects – get to know people now!

IP as Liaison

- IP serve as link to:
 - Local public health
 - The connection to local services, resources
 - CDC-NHSN
 - For prevention guidelines and surveillance
 - Regulators
 - For requirements specific to infection prevention
 - Patients, visitors, staff, and administration
- IPs serve as an advocate for patient safety

IP as Customer Service

Who are infection prevention customers?

- Patients
- Staff
- Physicians
- Visitors
- Community
- Public Health
- Anyone who calls for your consultation services

IP as Mentor and Leader

- Staff watch your behaviors
- You make decisions related to ethics and regulations
- You are responsible for IP policies and procedures
- IP should identify needs/desire for mentorship
 - Staff nurses interested in infection prevention
 - Students needing a preceptor
 - An IP Liaison team

Questions?

For more information,
please contact any
HAI Liaison IP Team member

Or email

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