

# 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

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




**Often times, when we need the cooperation and clear  
direction of those around us...  
Instead of coordinated efforts  
we get...**





**Confusion  
Uncertainty  
Rumors  
FEAR!!!**

**We presume that people want to  
protect their patients,  
but they need clear direction,  
consultation, and support.**



## What is the Role of the IP?

**PREVENTION!**

# An IP Needs Tools for many roles to Accomplish Prevention Objectives



## 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

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- Annual risk assessment
  - Infection prevention plan
  - Unit rounding
    - Nursing units, OR, GI lab, radiology, ED, clinics
  - Perform surveillance
  - Investigate suspected outbreaks
  - Educated based on prevention needs and problems
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## IP as HAI Prevention Expert

- Analyze, interpret, and feedback surveillance data
- Regularly review HAI surveillance findings with healthcare providers and leadership
  - Identify areas for prevention focus
  - Spur new prevention efforts
  - Measure progress and sustainability of prevention efforts over time
  - Provide encouragement to continue efforts when prevention success occurs
  - Motivate others to look for new ways to attain and sustain prevention

## IP as Consultant and Influencer

- Construction
- 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

**IPs have influence – our job is to learn how best to use it to keep patients, staff and visitors safe**

## IP as Educator

- Teach staff, visitors, and patients
  - Use evidence-based infection prevention practices
  - Infection risk, prevention and control methods
    - Annual Bloodborne Pathogens and Aerosolized Transmissible Diseases (ATD) classes
    - Updates on Pandemics
      - Influenza, Pertussis, Measles
    - New Employee Orientation
    - Volunteers, Construction Workers, Students
- Community Classes
  - The public likes to hear what IP have to say

## IP as Collaborator

- It really is ALL about relationships – with your EVS Director, OR Supervisor, Chief Engineer, marketing staff, Materials Management, Lab Director
  - What do you learn from their expertise?
  - Where is teamwork an integral part of finding the solution to the issue at hand?
  - Respect and acknowledgment are a two-way street
- The list is endless...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
- IPs should identify needs/desire for mentorship
- Staff nurses interested in IP
- Students needing a preceptor
- Begin an IP Liaison team



## WE ARE IP!

Spreading knowledge. Preventing infection.®



- Surveillance
- Epidemiology & Statistics
- Infectious Diseases
- Microbiology
- Disinfection/Sterilization
- Employee Health
- Principles of Adult Learning
- Outbreak investigations/  
communicable disease  
reporting
- Product Evaluation
- Policies & procedures
- More care is given in more  
settings across continuum
- Quality Improvement
- Waste Management
- Construction
- Bioterrorism Planning
- Pandemic Planning
- Technology – both at  
bedside and informatics
- Mandatory reporting
- Other legislative issues



Competency Model used with permission of  
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# Questions?

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

Thank you.