The Role of the Infection Preventionist
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
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

• 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
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
HEALTHCARE-ASSOCIATED INFECTIONS PROGRAM

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!

- 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 APIC, Inc
Questions?

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

Thank you.