

Working Toward Patient Safety

The saying “infection prevention is everyone’s business” will always stand true – it takes an entire team to impact patient safety. For this reason, the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) and the Association for the Healthcare Environment (AHE) have partnered to strengthen the relationship between infection prevention and environmental services (EVS) to improve patient outcomes and reduce infections. The joint educational campaign, titled “Clean Spaces, Healthy Patients: Leaders in Infection Prevention and Environmental Services working together for better patient outcomes,” is a testament to APIC’s and AHE’s strong commitment to patient safety. The campaign – which is part of APIC’s *Building Bridges to Improve Patient Outcomes* initiative and supported through an unrestricted education grant from Clorox Professionals Products Company – incorporates educational resources, training materials, and other solutions to help infection prevention and EVS professionals combat the spread of healthcare-associated infections.

The process of cleaning and disinfecting healthcare facilities is of the utmost importance to best ensure patient safety and prevent the spread of healthcare-associated infections. According to AHE practice guidance, daily cleaning and disinfecting of an occupied patient room with attention to high touch surfaces such as bedrails, knobs, call buttons, etc., will take approximately 25-30 minutes per room. A terminal/discharge cleaning will take longer, 40-45 minutes and up to 60 minutes, depending on room size, number of horizontal and high touch surfaces, and number of tasks to be performed in an efficacious manner.

“As the government and accrediting bodies increase scrutiny in this area, rigorous environmental cleaning becomes even more important,” said Bill Rutala, PhD, MPH, CIC, Clinical Advisor to APIC, and Director of Hospital Epidemiology, Occupational Health & Safety Program, University of North Carolina Health Care, Chapel Hill, N.C. “There are well-established guidelines for proper cleaning and disinfection, and making this information available to professionals and front line staff is vital.”

To determine the focus of the educational campaign,

2,000 members of APIC and AHE were surveyed to determine how they collaborate within their respective healthcare institutions in their daily work to protect patients. The Clean Spaces, Healthy Patients survey was conducted from August 8-20, 2011, with 2,011 respondents (12.6 percent response rate). Most respondents were infection prevention professionals (82.6 percent); EVS professionals represented 8.6 percent, and other professionals (administrators, nurses, doctors, managers) represented 8.8 percent of respondents. Seventy-nine percent of respondents work in a hospital setting. Survey results were presented at the AHE 2011 Annual Conference in Kissimmee, Fla.

“These survey results indicate that we can make improvements to ensure that the environment in which care is rendered helps to combat infections,” said Ruth Carrico, PhD, RN, CIC, Clinical Advisor to AHE, and Associate Professor at the University of Louisville School of Public Health and Information Sciences, Louisville, Ky. “Strengthening collaboration between infection prevention and environmental services staff will advance this goal and contribute to reducing infections and improving patient outcomes.”

Half of survey respondents find it difficult to locate useful resources about proper cleaning and disinfection (51 percent).

Seventy-three percent said their facilities educate EVS front line staff well about their role in infection prevention; 54 percent believe other staff could be better educated about their role in cleaning.

About six in 10 respondents believe educational resources on cleaning, disinfection, and infection prevention and control should be directed to executives and also to physicians. Half believe patients and families of patients should be a target audience, while one-third state the general public should be an audience. Nearly nine in 10 respondents believe EVS team members are treated with respect (85 percent). Almost nine in 10 are interested in hearing how other facilities have created successful IP-EVS partnerships (88 percent).



During the APIC 2011 Annual Conference, a Round Table Event was held featuring the distinguished group of experts chosen for the Clean Spaces, Healthy Patient project.

Moderator: Seth Kahan

Panelists:

David Weber, MD

Linda Dickey RN, MPH, CIC

Marita Nash MBA, CHESP

Kathy Roye-Horn RN, CIC

Ruth Carrico, PhD, RN, CIC

William Rutala PhD, MPH, CIC



William Rutala PhD, MPH, CIC, who is referred to as the “voice of authority” for disinfection practices, has convened major events on disinfection and sterilization at past APIC conferences, and has authored publications and books on disinfection and infection prevention.

As a leader within both AHE and APIC, Ruth Carrico, PhD, RN, CIC, provides knowledge and expertise in both infection prevention and environmental services.

Because the survey found that infection prevention and environmental services professionals believe there is a need for additional education and resources to facilitate successful prevention of health-care-associated infections, APIC is proud to collaborate with AHE to ensure that the necessary information is disseminated. To help meet these educational goals, APIC and AHE have convened a panel of the nation's leading infection prevention and environmental services professionals to assemble educational material to strengthen the relationships between infection preventionists and environmental services. Working together, the experts will provide guidance, and valuable tools provided at no cost, to assist build strong relationships between these two stakeholders while improving patient outcomes.

The initiation of the Clean Spaces, Healthy Patients campaign represents a cultural change that will ultimately impact patient safety throughout the world. **“When two conscientious professions such as Infection Prevention and Environmental Services focus their skills and energy on an issue as critical as a sterile patient environment, the results will not, and cannot be anything less than successful,”** said APIC Executive Vice President Denise Graham. **“Neither infection preventionists nor EVS professionals will accept anything less. Both professionals are passionate about the work they do, and both bring much to the table. APIC is extremely proud to be in the forefront of this major healthcare movement that is destined to spread across the U.S. in a rapid-fire manner.”**

More information at www.AHE.org