

AHE PERSPECTIVE

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» Stressing the importance of collaboration

This month, as AHE welcomes the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) to its Annual Conference and Healthcare Marketplace in Kissimmee, Fla., partnership and collaboration are in the spotlight.

By now you've likely heard about, if not participated in, surveys and discussions between AHE and APIC on the importance of collaboration between environmental services (ES) professionals and infection preventionists. The goal? To reduce health care-associated infections (HAIs) and improve patient safety.

As the central component of this new and critical collaboration, shepherded by a multidisciplinary advisory panel, AHE and APIC are developing plans to improve patient outcomes by building bridges between infection prevention and ES professionals.

A collaborative effort means individuals with complementary roles sharing responsibility for problem solving and working together to accomplish mutual goals and objectives to achieve a

desired end. How can ES and infection prevention professionals forge effective, sustainable collaborations that result in improved patient outcomes, reduce the rate of HAIs and leverage the skills and expertise each collaborator brings?

Forging an effective and viable collaboration under any circumstance takes time and considerable effort.

Trust and mutual respect are primary characteristics needed by the partners. A simple formula for building that trust might look like this: Exposure + Flexibility + Disclosure = Trust

Recognizing the valuable contributions of each person goes a long way in developing respect and fostering trust. A case in point: The notion must be dispelled that the work of ES professionals is unimportant, expendable and not guided by evidence-

based best practices. Similarly, the work of infection preventionists must never be viewed as superfluous.

Collaborators also need to be flexible when getting to know each other's work

styles and routines. Each needs to understand why certain practices are followed and how these practices relate to the accomplishment of goals and objectives. Finally, everyone must be willing to disclose his or her thoughts, opinions and opportunities for improvement as the relationship progresses.

In a recent educational program, John Po, M.D., president of the Arizona Infectious Diseases Society, proposed that health care facilities nominate from the executive administrative office a "champion" to campaign vigorously throughout the facility to raise the visibility and promote the importance of infection prevention through the work of ES professionals and infection preventionists. Indeed, such visibility and import could prove to be highly impactful to the work of both groups.

AHE and APIC's initiative to forge meaningful and respectful collaborations between ES and infection prevention highlights the fundamental issues and success factors critical to achieving improved patient outcomes for each group. Will effective collaboration prove to be the solution for health care facilities? We believe it will. ■

This month's column was written by AHE's Patti Costello, executive director, and Sandra Rials, education manager.



» AHE insight

Valuable resources

AHE offers a variety of educational materials. They include the following:

- *Practice Guidance for Healthcare Environmental Cleaning*. This publication, prepared by AHE and edited by infection control professionals, contains requirements for environmental cleaning in health care facilities. Targeted for environmental services directors and

managers, this book can be used as a resource for implementing proper cleaning techniques and procedures.

- *Contracting: Myths & Realities*. This publication covers everything from outsourcing to management pitfalls. It includes sample surveys, budgets and task lists that will assist in making the best contracting decisions for a health care facility's environmental services department. AHE re-released this manual to keep environmental services professionals at the top of their game.

• *Glossary of Healthcare Terms for Environmental Services*. This convenient reference tool features hundreds of terms and definitions organized alphabetically, both general and specific to environmental services, housekeeping and textile care.

For information on purchasing these and other valuable industry references, select "AHA Store," then "Environmental Services" at https://www.associationstores.org/OA_HTML/lbeCCtpSctDspRte.jsp?section=10160. ■