

Education in infection control more important than ever



Toby Krell, right, and colleague Nancy Clayton, Medical Technologist, discuss which organism may be growing on the plate and what the next step in testing is to determine more specifically.

By Katie Schrank

From SARS to Swine Flu, Toronto has seen its share of epidemics. When these situations occur, it takes the whole health care system to combat them. And when members of our health care system band together, they can do amazing things.

One thing learned from these outbreaks is that preparation is of utmost importance. Planning for the worst possible scenario is needed, even if things never hit that point. With the knowledge gained after SARS, health care workers are more informed on infection control practices, but there is always new knowledge and there are new procedures being created.

After realizing that information around infection control was growing, and more people needed and wanted to gain knowledge in best practices, The Michener Institute developed the Infection Control and Epidemiology course offered through its continuing professional education department.

The course includes eight different learning modules. Practitioners learn everything from infectious disease processes and identification of causative agents, to how to control and prevent communicable disease outbreaks in the community and health care settings. At the end of the course practitioners will have the knowledge to implement and, most importantly, evaluate an infection control program for their organization.

The opportunity to gain more knowledge in infection control has attracted health care practitioners from across Canada and around the world. Dr. Juan Camilo Rodriguez, an MD in Colombia, had an interest in learning more about infection control because he saw the importance it holds in the medical field. "When you go inside the concepts of infection control taught in this course, you can see the importance of this area in the medical field," says Dr. Rodriguez, who is a member of the Epidemiology and Infection Control Committee, Ecopetrol Polyclinic in Barrancabermeja, Colombia.

On-line delivery of the course provides many multi-media learning options, making it easy for health care practitioners to work on assignments outside of regular school/work hours. Group work and case studies assist practitioners in learning best practices in infection control and epidemiology for Canadian hospitals. Scheduled weekly discussion sessions for practitioners facilitated by the professor enable group debate on each week's lessons.

Toby Krell, Manager of Infection Prevention & Control at St. Joseph's General Hospital in British Columbia, enrolled in the program to expand her knowledge when moving into a new position. "I gained confidence as each module expanded my knowledge by building on what I had learned while practicing," she says. "It gave me foundational knowledge on which to base the decisions I was making, as well as many reference sources for informing myself and others about infection control best practices."

One of the most important reasons every hospital needs a fulsome infection control policy is to make sure that should an epidemic hit, patients will receive the best possible care. Practitioners in the Infection Control and Epidemiology course are taught the best ways to protect patients, and themselves, in the case of such an epidemic, hopefully leading to the best possible patient care. "Patient care has benefitted from my ability to educate, advocate and work more effectively with hospital colleagues and in the community as a quick and responsive resource person," says Krell.

For more information on the Infection Control and Epidemiology course at Michener please visit www.michener.ca and click on continuing education.

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