40 years of growth and progress

APIC past presidents reflect on the advancement of APIC and the profession over the last 40 years.

Formed with the purpose of uniting “healthcare workers of all disciplines who share the common goal of improving patient care through infection control activities,” the Association for Practitioners in Infection Control (APIC) was conceived by a steering committee of nurses attending a course for infection control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This visionary group [see the complete list of founders at www.apic.org/history] saw the need for an organized approach to preventing “nosocomial infections.”

Prevention Strategist takes a look back at the history of APIC and shares the perspectives of APIC past presidents.
Patricia Lynch

“In 1967 in the U.S., perhaps as many as a dozen hospitals had started institutional infection prevention, mostly directed at the outbreaks of common source infections that were astonishingly frequent. About that time, the CDC began a twice yearly, week-long training program under the direction of Claire Coppage. For the first three years, each class selected two representatives who committed to help start an infection control organization.

“Claire worked tirelessly to raise money to hold a meeting to found an infection control association. In 1971, Burroughs Wellcome & Co. agreed to host such a meeting at their headquarters in Triangle Park, NC. The faculty and selected participants from 1200G [the name of training program] who were able to attend developed the framework for the organization; we were solely from the U.S. and Canada at that time, but from the beginning, we planned to be global. Each of us chipped in $20 for starters and began planning the first conference for Toronto 1973. By the morning of the third day, we had the organization, committees, logo, officers, and a plan. APIC was on the way!

“Money was always a problem. Vision was clear as could be; we knew that if we were successful, in a few short years, it would be impossible to think of infection control in the U.S. and Canada without thinking of APIC. We knew that preventing lethal common source infections was ours to accomplish locally—outbreak by outbreak—and globally, because few others were working on the problems. We knew that it would require major education initiatives in the form of local, regional and international conferences, training, and written curricula. There would be healthcare culture change.”

1973

- APIC’s first educational conference was held in Toronto in 1973.
- Membership number: 650+

1974

- The first local chapter, New England Chapter 1, was founded by Carole DeMille, Betsy Pantelick, Shirley Bradley, and others.

1975-76

- Carole DeMille was APIC president. Carole’s contributions to the profession and to improved patient care have lived on far beyond her death in 1979. Carole was known for her reverence of the past, vision of the future, and optimistic approach to present day realities. See page 47 to read reflections and memories of Carole.

1978

- APIC participated in the first international conference on the role of the “Infection Control Nurse” sponsored by the World Health Organization in Denmark.
- APIC releases first position statement titled “Statement on Infection Control Programs.”
1980

- Carole DeMille Achievement Award established to perpetuate DeMille’s ideals. Since its inception, more than 32 infection preventionists have received this award.
- The APIC Journal became the American Journal of Infection Control (AJIC).

1981

- APIC Certification Association (APICCA) was established.
- The first Infection Control Certification Board was appointed.

1982

- APICCA changed its name to the Certification Board of Infection Control (CBIC).

Jean Parret

“During my presidency, APIC was a young, growing, committed and caring group of members and elected leaders. I saw a need to bring the board and the members closer together.”

1983

George Counts

“What was lacking in 1983 was assurance of standardization—that all ICPs possessed the body of knowledge and skills believed to be essential to the practice of infection control. We developed and published the first APIC Curriculum for Infection Control Practice, a resource document and self-assessment tool.”

- CBIC offered first formal examinations.
- Membership number: 5,000+

1986

Nancy Click

“One of the most significant events during my presidency in 1986 was the passage of Public Law 99-373 by Congress and signing by President Reagan, proclaiming National Infection Control Week the third week of October [now International Infection Prevention Week]. It was a time of many changes in healthcare with the introduction of the prospective payment system. APIC also sponsored a public service announcement, highlighting the problems of infections in hospitals.”

- Infection control was upgraded by the Health Care Financing Administration [now Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services] from a standard under sanitary environment to a separate Condition of Participation.
- Membership number: 7,000+
1993-1994

- The name of the association changed to the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology, to better reflect the membership and their changing roles.
- The APIC national office was established in Washington, DC.
- APIC hires first CEO.
- APIC starts Research Foundation.

1995

Terrie Lee

“The most significant event of my APIC presidency was the introduction of the age of electronic communications and the Internet to our profession. I focused on strengthening our professional credibility with instantaneous access to resources.”

1996

- The APIC Infection Control and Applied Epidemiology: Principles and Practice was published; this replaced the previous APIC Curriculum for Infection Control Practice. It is now known as the APIC Text.
- APICList, now known as IP Talk, debuted. APIC.org website launched.

1997

Candace Friedman

“APIC honored members of the original steering committee at the APIC 1997 Annual Conference in New Orleans. A 25th anniversary logo was placed on most APIC items to remind us of this important occasion. In addition, AJIC developed special topics for each issue as part of our anniversary celebration.”

Barbara Russell

“In 1993, Lynn McDonald, the president at the time, and I helped manage the organization after dissolving our relationship with the former management company. A former partner of the original company agreed to assist us until we found a new home and a CEO to allow us to become a self-managed organization. We asked past president Jean Parret to temporarily relocate to Mundelein, Illinois to assist Ed Styger’s staff and to help go through everything in storage in preparation for the next move. For Jean that was the beginning of ‘Miss Jean’s Place’ at APIC conferences.”

Visit the APIC website under “About APIC” to read more about the history of the association.
2002
- The first APIC/CDC/SHEA Patient Safety Symposium was held.
- APIC/CBIC were represented on The Joint Commission Infection Control Advisory Panel.
- APIC produced new e-learning modules, toolkits/handbooks and a revised APIC Text.

Georgia Dash
“It was a year that I shall always remember because it demonstrated, in an incredibly powerful way, the strength and commitment of the APIC community to provide infection prevention resources in support of our colleagues, our healthcare facilities and the public as they dealt with the wave of bioterrorism attacks that followed the tragedy of 9/11.”

Sue Sebazco
“It was at this time infection control was being rethought as infection prevention and the concept of ‘zero’ was introduced to our profession.”

2004
- Membership number: 10,000+

2005
- APIC-sponsored Consensus Conference on Realizing the Benefits of Public Reporting
- APIC releases position paper on mandatory public reporting of HAIs.

New
EMS Implementation Guide
This easy-to-use guide will help you gain an understanding of infection prevention standards, regulations, and best practices in patient and EMS system responder safety.

This complimentary, easy-to-use guide includes:
- Instructions, examples, and tools to conduct surveillance and risk assessments
- Forms and templates for infection prevention education, training, and compliance monitoring
- Emergency, disaster, and bioterrorism preparedness materials

Visit www.apic.org/EMSguide for more information.
2006

- APIC Vision 2012 strategic plan was introduced.

Kathleen Arias

“Zero tolerance is not a number—it’s a culture in which healthcare providers strive to prevent as many healthcare-associated infections as possible. We may never eliminate every infection, and many cannot be prevented, but ICPs should accept nothing less than the very lowest rates of infection.”

[excerpt from Annual Conference address]

2007

- The Joint Public Policy Committee (APIC, SHEA, CDC, CSTE) create “Essentials of Public Reporting of Healthcare-Associated Infections: A Tool Kit.”

- APIC’s first major research study was published: the Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) prevalence study.

2008

- APIC rebranded its position in the field with the new tagline, “Spreading Knowledge. Preventing Infection.”

- APIC Consulting Services established.

- APIC published its second major research study: the National U.S. Inpatient Healthcare Facility Clostridium difficile Survey.

Remembering Carole DeMille

Patricia Lynch:

“I was inspired by her, laughed with her, got kicked into gear by her. Carole was unstoppable, inventive and wildly fun to work with. One night after a long day of an APIC Board meeting we were tired and discouraged. We couldn’t afford elections AND a conference so we would all have to re-up for another year; also, we were eating burgers from McDonald’s—again—and bedtime was too far off. Carole made us stop what we were working on and develop a budget for $100,000, a sum well beyond what we had even dreamed about. She made us do it! We were absolutely energized by the budget exercise and our vision improved immediately. Carole was like that. Long after she passed on, her influence still flowed through us.”

Barbara Russell:

“I was very fortunate to know Carole DeMille and believe many of her traits rubbed off on me. She even visited us in South Florida. I remember saying to myself, I want to be like her some day and that made it very special when I received the Carole DeMille Award in 2002.”

Cathryn Murphy:

“Rather than try and condense the enormous respect, affection and commitment I feel for APIC and its members I would prefer to submit this poem dedicated to Carole DeMille as the closing part of my 2010 presidential address. It tells far better than I could how Carole’s vision for the organization has grown to be the organization so loved by us all.

So Carole
I’ve told you lots of stories, I’ve shared my biggest fears,
I’ve done it with great pride but I’m holding back the tears
You now know about your APIC, the one you helped us build.
You’ve heard about its growth, you know it leads the field;
I wonder how you find us? I wonder are you proud?
Should we bask a while in sunlight or cower under cloud?
Have we carried on your passion, your integrity, your direction?
Have we honoured your intention, your vision and your perfection?
Have we been relentless, successful and courageous?
How do you really find us? Well intended or outrageous?
Have we made preventing infection appealing, perhaps inviting
Would it still attract you, would it be exciting?
Whatever your answer, whatever your view
On behalf of APIC, its members and its crew,
Let, me say it loudly
Carole DeMille rest well, we miss you, and
Thank you

Lorraine Harkavy:

“Carole DeMille was a warm, kind person. I never saw Carole when she didn’t have a smile on her face. She was passionate about infection control and prevention and had every patient on her mind and the importance of protecting them and the staff... When I started in infection control, I contacted Carole for advice and guidance. She was always willing to help and was gracious to share her time and knowledge. Along the way, we always took our work seriously, but not ourselves. So we had a few good laughs at ourselves when we realized we were still learning and always would be.”

George Counts:

“I first joined the APIC board in 1977, which was then under the leadership of Carole DeMille. Aside from her enormous fund of knowledge about infection control and hospitals, Carole had impressive leadership skills. She had the ability to interact with persons, make them comfortable, and make them willing to follow her. She could also laugh at circumstances and at herself. I was very pleased when APIC decided to honor her memory by establishing in her name its highest award. She represented a level of professionalism toward which all of us could properly aim.”
Christine Nutty

“Lecturing at 18 different chapter conferences in the U.S. was both a challenge and an honor for me. The greatest joy from this experience was meeting face-to-face, more than a thousand members. Listening to persons from around the world who do the same jobs and share some of the same problems was an absolute joy.”

Cathryn Murphy

“2010 was an amazing year for APIC. We spearheaded major efforts to work collaboratively with U.S. public policy stakeholders. At that year’s annual conference we welcomed delegates from more non-North American locations than in any previous year.”

References:

5. APIC. Carole DeMille Achievement Award. Accessed: October 5. Available at: http://www.apic.org/Resource_/TinyMceFileManager/Awards_PDFs/2012CDMaward.doc