Top seven for the seven days of International Infection Prevention Week

How to create an infection prevention movement through IIPW

BY JANIENE TORCH BOHANNON

International Infection Prevention Week (IIPW), October 14-20, raises awareness of the role infection prevention plays in healthcare settings to improve patient safety. The week is fast approaching; do you have a plan for helping to spread the word about the importance of infection prevention? Infection prevention starts with you, but it takes a team to adopt best practices for patient safety. After all, infection prevention is everyone’s business. Explore the top seven ways to get everyone on board with infection prevention and take this message to consumers:

1. **Share knowledge and learn together.**
   
   Consider organizing a lunch and learn during IIPW and invite various departments in your healthcare organization, including environmental services (EVS), nursing, surgery, laboratory, and others. Participate together in the educational webinars that will be held during the week. Also consider playing a video from the APIC 2012 Film Festival (www.apic.org/filmfestival2012) to promote adherence to infection prevention best practices through humor, music, drama, and/or dance.
   
   Meet with your EVS department to discuss holding a shadow program during IIPW, in which EVS personnel shadow infection preventionists (IPs), and vice versa. Much can be learned from collaborating and joining forces to understand one another’s roles in patient safety. Visit www.apic.org/cleanspaces to learn more about APIC’s Clean Spaces, Healthy Patients project.
   
   Take an opportunity to explore your own professional development. Become familiar with the new IP Competency Model (www.apic.org/Professional-Practice/Infection_preventionist_IP_competency_model), plan on becoming board certified in infection prevention, and chart your next steps to move your professional career forward.

2. **Think beyond the walls of your healthcare organization.**
   
   There is power in numbers. Together with your APIC chapter, reach out to your local health department, community hospitals, and schools to organize a joint campaign to promote infection prevention to the public. For example, pass out hand sanitizers to community members at bus stops, grocery stores, ball parks, or any other busy public area. Organize a hand washing and “cover your cough” demonstration for students at local schools. Plan a public flu vaccine clinic and pass out literature on why infection prevention is important. “Like” the IIPW Facebook page and drive consumers to it (www.facebook.com/IIPWeek) to engage them in conversations about the importance of infection prevention.
   
   If you aren’t already a member of a chapter, visit the APIC website to reap the benefits of being one of many allied IPs (www.apic.org/Member-Services/Chapters). Participate in the events of or learn from the creative ideas of...
the 2012 IIPW chapter grant recipients (www.apic.org/iipw). Also be sure to read the winter 2011 Prevention Strategist article titled “Global to Local” to get more inspiring ideas.

3 Make it fun.

Although infection prevention is a very serious topic and an essential part of keeping patients safe, that doesn’t mean that it’s not possible to deliver the infection prevention message in a light-hearted way. Can you engage your colleagues through a contest or game of some sort? Could you dress as your favorite microorganism to make an added impression? Also consider recognizing infection prevention “champions” or “ambassadors” outside the infection prevention department via observation and surveillance of hand hygiene; award the ambassadors with prizes.

4 Incorporate infection prevention messages in new and novel ways.

Collaborate with your healthcare organization’s communications department to ask them to include a short article on the celebration of IIPW in an in-house newsletter, e-newsletter, or e-blast to employees. In addition, ask if a promotional IIPW sentence can be added to employees’ email signature line, or use social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) to spread the infection preven-
tion message. Work with your colleagues in drafting a letter to your healthcare administration that includes details on IIPW and how infection prevention contributes to patient safety.

Don’t forget to reach out to your patients. If you haven’t already, print “Infection Prevention and You” campaign materials—available in English and Spanish—to educate patients on their role in infection prevention (www.apic.org/patientsafety). Ask your healthcare organization to include the “Infection Prevention and You” brochures or flyers in patient admissions packets or in waiting rooms. Long-term care, home care, and ambulatory versions of the campaign material are now also available.

5 Be a VIP.

Advocacy starts with you. Be a Voice for Infection Prevention (VIP) and help educate legislators on the importance of infection prevention. Work with your fellow chapter members and use the new

Left: APIC Chapter Leader Representatives (CLRs) provided Missouri lawmakers with information surrounding the work of infection preventionists and the importance of preventing healthcare-associated infections in 2011. Use the Advocacy Toolkit to learn how you can plan similar visits and take action. Shown in this photo: Casey Landholt (Greater St. Louis CLR), Rep. Keith Frederick (vice-chair of Missouri’s House Committee on Health Care Policy), and Jeanne Yegge (former CLR and current Greater St. Louis chapter secretary). PHOTO COURTESY OF CASEY LANDHOLT

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International Infection Prevention Week October 14-20

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Visit the IIPW website frequently to access promotional tools and stay current with activities, education, and events—www.apic.org/iipw.

Advocacy Toolkit to help guide your outreach and plan a visit to your state legislature. The toolkit contains tips for planning your visit, deciding which legislators to meet, and preparing informational material to share (www.apic.org/Advocacy/Government-Affairs-and-Advocacy). Also, be sure to sign up for the APIC public policy action e-list to get regular policy updates as soon as they are available (capwiz.com/apic/mlm/signup). No time for a live visit? Contact your legislators on behalf of infection prevention through the “Take action” page of the APIC website (capwiz.com/apic/home).

Become an insider.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel. Learn from other IPs who are planning IIPW events in their communities by joining the MyAPIC IIPW community. Visit www.apic.org/myapic to get started.

Wear your pride on your sleeve.

Purchase IIPW merchandise (www.jimcolemanltd.com/iipw) – such as pins, t-shirts, stickers, water bottles, balloons, and more – to show your pride for infection prevention. Also be sure to share the merchandise with your colleagues during this week to create a team atmosphere. Make your enthusiasm contagious (pun intended) and help your colleagues own infection prevention. In addition, 5 percent of the proceeds from IIPW merchandise purchases go to APIC Research, which coordinates initiatives focused on practical solutions– grounded in science–and that can be implemented across the spectrum of healthcare settings. Get something and give back! 😊

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