

QUICK TIPS FOR CRITICAL PARTNERSHIPS

As the director of infection prevention at Ascension Health St. Thomas Midtown in Nashville, I describe the relationship between our team of infection preventionists (IPs) and environmental services as minimizing risk and increasing safety when it comes to preventing disease transmission.

Environmental Services and Infection Prevention

Somewhat rare in the industry, the environmental services team reports to infection prevention and serves on its committee. David Cope, director of Environmental Services at St. Thomas, and the system's director in the city, Michael Martin, work closely with our infection prevention team. We are very collaborative and discuss issues and changes to processes or products. For instance, ATP testing is performed on all positive, difficult discharge patient rooms and other random samplings. The team is notified of any positive results. Rooms that are positive are recleaned, retested, and must pass before releasing the room for the next patient.

Tip: ATP testing is a good education and validation tool to identify how well

minimize disposal SIs. The facility changed to a sharps management service and saw a 10 percent decrease in needle sticks. The burden was eased on the environmental services and health care personnel (HCP) teams to monitor containers because the sharps management service took care of it for us. Only during periods of high volume, environmental services teams may be asked to change a container, but this is infrequent. There have been no issues, and

Tip: Taking HCP away from the handling of sharps containers has helped reduce sharps injuries and potential for disease transmission.

C. difficile and Sharps Container Considerations

Recently a survey (found at www.bd.com/sharps/pdf/AJIC-MP-sharps-poster.pdf) attempted to associate reusable sharps containers with transmission of C. difficile. There are several reasons I believe that there is a very low probability that reusable sharps containers play any role in disease transmission. If a container is full, environmental services will change it, but not HCP who has patient contact. Following care of our C. difficile positive patients, HCP use a hand-washing technique with soap and water for 15 seconds before leaving the room and seeing the next patient. This step lessens the chance for cross-contamination to the environment and to themselves or others. This facility has not had any correlation in C. difficile infections related to reusable sharps containers, which have been used for more than five years.

Tip: Follow stringent IP practices and policies like hand hygiene, isolation, equipment disinfection, and sharp practices that are intended to keep HCP and patients safe.

Creating a collaborative atmosphere between environmental services and infection prevention teams, including the shaping of Environment-of-Care Rounds to include multiple departments and having a best-practice bundle, highlights the various ways to prevent disease transmission. Using reusable sharps containers not only prevents sharps injuries, as a service managed by a third party partner, but they may help minimize disease transmission.

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