

Infection Control in the ED



“The Invisible Enemy”

Why does All of this Matter?

The Basic Problem



- Under the microscope everything in life can be distilled down to either love or fear.
- The world of Infections is extremely fearful for both patients and their caregivers.
- **Helping infected patients cope with pain and fear is the ultimate role of a Caregiver (Caring is every bit as important as Curing)**

The View from the Bed

“ Absolutely Overwhelming Fear ! ”

1st 24 Hours – Mere Survival

Day 2- Did I unknowingly infect my entire Family?

Day 3 to 7 - Will they have to amputate?

Day 8 to 730 - Will it return?



Communications

- **HCW Says:** “We can’t release what kind of Bacteria infected you.”
- **Patient Hears:** Major cover-up in progress

Communications

- **HCW Says:** “The Bacteria was Staph Epidermis. It came from your own skin.”
- **Patient Hears:** If I wasn't such a filthy slob I wouldn't be in this mess.

Communications

- **HCW Says:** “We have no idea how you became infected.”
- **Patient Hears:** Either they don’t want to know or I am not worth the effort to figure it out.

Communications

- **HCW says:** “ But our cultures showed that our instruments were sterile”
- **Patient Hears:** I get it! If you get food poisoning as long as they gave you a clean fork they are not responsible.

Communications

- **HCW Says:** All surgeries have some amount of Bacteria. Usually the patients immune system handles it.
- **Patient Hears:** Wow, I must have a really pathetic immune system! But I never get sick not even colds.

Communications

- **HCW says:** “If you insist we will investigate but by law we cannot disclose the results of our investigation”.
- **Patient Hears:** I could endure almost anything if I just knew WHY !

Communications

- **HCW Says:** But our Hospital's infection rates are better than the National Average.
- **Patient Hears:** That fact may help you sleep at night but it does nothing for me.

Communications



- **HCW says:** “ You bought complete responsibility for infection costs when you signed the surgical consent form”
- **Patient Hears:** Sure don't recall seeing bankruptcy on the list of complications! Better check my house equity fast.

Communications

- **HCW Says:** “Go ahead and sue us. You can’t prove how that bacteria got into your arm!”
- **Patient Hears:** I would be better off if this stuff had killed me!



Top Ten Patient Hospital-Acquired Infection Issues (per CU survey)

10. No one paid attention to my pleas for help
9. My requests for prevention were spurned
8. I wasn't informed about my infection
7. I had to take responsibility for the care of my loved one
6. I was told infections are expected (SIR)
5. I have suffered immensely
4. I lost my job, my insurance, my way of life, my home
3. No one would accept any responsibility
2. No one told me I could spread MRSA to my loved ones.
1. I don't want this to happen to anyone else

Prescription Empathy

- Always tell the patient what organism he has been blessed with.
- Tell the patient the most likely ways he contracted his infection.
- Lay out in detail the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly prognosis.
- Spend time with us in the Isolation Ward. (The loneliest place on Earth)
- Give us some solid clues on how to prevent this next time.
- Waive the out of pocket bills.
- Learn to express genuine remorse.
- Never ever send survey form letters to known victims.
- **Love Thy Infected Patient (Even the very difficult ones)**

Special “Basket” Cases

- For those patients lucky enough to need more surgery after surviving an infection the Fear is Unlimited!
- It is possible to be so scared to speak.
- Don't ever tell them you are going to use your standard sterile technique again! (Make something up).
- Make sure every HCW on the floor knows this patient is a very fearful survivor.

The Greatest Opportunity

“Emotional Cohorting”

- Recruit Infection Survivors to comfort & empathize with the newly infected.
- It's Free!!
- Allows survivors to heal and find meaning from their ordeals.
- Profound comfort for the fearful, newly infected, patient.

“Expertise Cures.. but wounded people can best be healed by other wounded people.”

Rachel Naomi Remen MD

Ultimate Infection Care

Waking up Infected doesn't have to be a Nightmare.

Reduce the patient's fear and anger so that emotional healing and personal growth can occur.

My trip to the ED



Anne's Experience in the ED

- Mother of 5



- ED patient's are the most fearful of all



Brian's Experience in the ED

- 26 year old veteran
Two tours of Duty

Even tough guys are rendered helpless



Nic's Experience in the ED

- My youngest son



- Great Idea



The Bottom Line

- Each and every one of you here today has the ability to transform infections from being a “Life Threatening Experience” into a “Life Changing Experience” through the expression of Empathy towards your infected patients!



Questions ?

Some journeys are a lot more fun than Healthcare. Looking for riding partners..... the ultimate way to see Colorado.