

APIC launches first national C. difficile prevalence study

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The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) today announced a detailed strategy to combat Clostridium difficile-associated disease (CDAD). The initiative begins with the first national prevalence study to gain a better understanding of the spread of this virulent pathogen.

C. difficile is a life-threatening bacterium that causes diarrhea and more serious intestinal conditions such as colitis and is frequently associated with prolonged antibiotic use. CDAD is most commonly contracted by the elderly and those with recent exposure to hospitals, nursing homes and other healthcare institutions. Over the past several years, a more toxic strain of C. difficile has emerged causing outbreaks in healthcare facilities worldwide.

“We are concerned by reports of increasing infection rates and severity of CDAD,” said APIC Chief Executive Officer Kathy L. Warye. “Not only does it lead to longer hospital stays, which result in higher healthcare costs, but deaths from C. difficile infections also are on the rise. Because the true magnitude of this infection is unknown, our objective is to provide the first national estimate of C. difficile infection in inpatients in U.S. healthcare facilities.”

The APIC Research Foundation C. difficile Prevalence Study will be conducted May 1 to May 23, 2008. More than 5,000 healthcare facilities are being invited to participate by providing a one-day snapshot of C. difficile infections within their institution.

Following the survey, APIC will develop a Guide to the Elimination of *C. difficile*, including strategies for controlling transmission as well as an educational Webinar series. The Association also will hold a conference in late 2008, featuring results of the prevalence study, along with the latest science, epidemiology and best practices for the elimination of *C. difficile* transmission.

“Following our positive experience in having taken a very comprehensive approach to MRSA in 2007, APIC will launch a similar aggressive fight against *C. difficile* in 2008,” said Warye. “APIC will lead a national effort to arm infection prevention professionals with the comprehensive tools necessary to eradicate this virulent pathogen and reduce *C. difficile* infections. Prevention efforts are crucial because our arsenal of effective treatment agents is thin, and the organism is rapidly developing resistance.”

Source: Association for Professionals in Infection Control

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