

New centers help health workers fight deadly infections

October 5 2015, by Sam Hostettler

CDC PREVENTION EPICENTERS PROGRAM DISCOVERING NEW WAYS TO PROTECT PATIENTS

What is a Prevention Epicenter? A unique research program in which CDC collaborates with academic investigators to conduct innovative infection control and prevention research.



Innovations to Improve Patient Safety

CDC guides and collaborates with Prevention Epicenters to protect patients by filling prevention knowledge gaps identified by CDC's outbreak response and surveillance data.



Estimated Prevention Epicenters National Reach

333

healthcare facilities

2.6 million

hospital admissions

1.5 million

unique patients per year

Locations



<http://www.cdc.gov/hai/epicenters>

CS259643A

National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases
Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion (DHQP)



The University of Illinois at Chicago has been selected as one of six

research centers in the U.S. to help develop a comprehensive new strategy to control Ebola and other emerging infectious diseases in health facilities.

The UIC Epicenter for Prevention of Healthcare Associated Infections will study how healthcare workers can care for patients with emerging infectious diseases without putting themselves at risk. It is a new collaboration between infectious disease physicians in the UIC College of Medicine and industrial hygienists in the UIC School of Public Health.

Research funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will be conducted at three Chicago hospitals: the University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences System, the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, and St. Anthony's Hospital.

Following the largest Ebola epidemic in history last year, which claimed the lives of more than 11,000 people in West Africa and ultimately spread to the U.S., [public health](#) officials remain concerned about healthcare workers contracting Ebola or other emerging infectious diseases such as SARS and pandemic influenza, says Rachael Jones, UIC associate professor of environmental and occupational and health sciences, one of four co-investigators at UIC.

"There are significant uncertainties about how emerging infectious diseases are transmitted, and how easy it is to become infected with these diseases, making it difficult to evaluate the risk to healthcare workers and other patients," Jones said.

Officials also want to know how much protection is afforded by personal protective equipment, work practices, and other [infection-control](#) precautions caregivers use to reduce exposure to pathogens and risk of infection, she said.

More equipment may not protect healthcare workers if they can't perform tasks safely in bulky gear, or if they contaminate themselves when taking it off, said Dr. Susan Bleasdale, assistant professor in the UIC College of Medicine, infection control medical director and co-investigator at UIC.

UIC will receive \$2.2 million during the three-year program. University of Iowa, University of Maryland at Baltimore, University of Utah, Emory University, and Johns Hopkins University are other new Prevention Epicenters.

The CDC Prevention Epicenters program is a "unique research program that develops and evaluates innovative strategies to improve healthcare quality and patient safety," said Dr. Tom Frieden, CDC director. CDC partners directly with a network of academic medical centers to address important questions to prevent healthcare-associated infections and antibiotic resistance.

Spread of [infectious diseases](#) in healthcare settings adds billions of dollars to healthcare costs in the U.S. Infectious diseases like influenza, antibiotic-resistant bacteria, and C. difficile can spread when infection control measures are insufficient or if recommendations are not followed.

"Five to 10 percent of patients admitted to hospitals will develop a healthcare associated infection, and up to 90,000 deaths a year are attributed to healthcare-associated infections," Bleasdale said. "We need to decrease those numbers to protect our patients and employees."

Understanding how healthcare workers can become contaminated "will help us find new ways to prevent the spread of infections in hospitals," she said.

With Jones and Bleasdale, UIC co-investigators are Lisa Brosseau, professor of environmental and occupational [health sciences](#), and Dr. Monica Sikka, associate medical director of infection control.

Provided by University of Illinois at Chicago

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