

EPI Update for Friday, March 9, 2012
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Healthcare-associated infections not limited to hospitals**
- **Discuss well safety with patients**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Healthcare-associated infections not limited to hospitals

A CDC report released this week indicates infections from *Clostridium difficile*, a bacteria that causes diarrhea and other health issues, is a patient safety concern in all types of medical facilities, not just hospitals as traditionally thought. Therefore, infection control practices to prevent transmission should be applied to hospitals, nursing homes and ambulatory-care settings. Infection control practices include the following:

- *C. difficile* forms spores that survive for long periods of time, so Contact Precautions (which include the use of gowns and gloves) and hand washing are critical in hospitals and long term care facilities to stop transmission to other susceptible patients.
- Test patients who have three or more unformed stools within 24 hours.
 - Laboratory testing can detect *C. difficile* toxin, but cannot be used as a test of cure because the test can remain positive long after the patient is successfully treated.
 - Asymptomatic patients should never be tested for *C. difficile* toxin and a negative *C. difficile* toxin assay should not be required for admission to a long term care facility.
- Antibiotics should be prescribed carefully. Once culture results are available, determine whether the prescribed antibiotics are appropriate and necessary.
- Be aware of infection rates in your facility or practice, and follow infection prevention and control recommendations with every patient.

IDPH, working with hospitals across the state and the Iowa Healthcare Collaborative, is participating in CDC efforts to reduce healthcare-associated infections (HAI). According to data reported to the CDC, 61 percent of Iowa healthcare facilities have reported at least one HAI, including *C. difficile*. The IDPH HAI Prevention Plan outlines state efforts to reduce healthcare-associated infections.

To access the CDC report, visit www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/wk/mm61e0306.pdf.

For more information on the IDPH HAI Plan, visit

www.idph.state.ia.us/hai_prevention/plan.asp.

For more information on antibiotic use, visit www.cdc.gov/getsmart/specific-groups/hcp/index.html.

Discuss well safety with patients

About 20 percent of Iowans get their drinking water from private wells and when tested, about one-third of those private wells typically produce an 'unsafe' result for bacterial

levels. In addition, Iowa is estimated to have as many as 200,000 abandoned wells and cisterns. These abandoned wells not only provide a safety hazard because of improper closure, they can also leach contamination into the groundwater.

Please discuss the importance of getting an annual water well checkup with all patients who get their drinking water from private wells. This is especially important in patients experiencing enteric illness and those that are immune compromised. Recommending that abandoned wells be properly capped is more important in households with young children.

For more information, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/grants.asp.
To learn how private individuals can get their water tested, visit www.shl.uiowa.edu/services/wellwater/ordering.xml.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

14th Annual Update in Infectious Diseases

Update in Infectious Diseases: Infectious Diseases in Primary Care, sponsored by the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine, will be held Friday, April 27, 2012 at the Hotel Vetro and Conference Center in downtown Iowa City.

For registration information and the detailed agenda, visit <http://cmetracker.net/UIOWA/Files/Brochures/52407.pdf>.

Iowa Governor's Conference on Public Health

The 2012 Iowa Governor's Conference on Public Health will be held April 17 and 18 at the Scheman Conference Center in Ames. Early registration ends on March 31st. The conference brochure and online registration can be accessed at <http://www.iowapha.org/Default.aspx?pageId=127969>.

Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists

The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists will hold its annual conference June 3-7, 2012 in Omaha, Nebraska. Registration for the conference is now open. For conference materials and online registration, visit www.csteconference.org.

Have a healthy and happy week!

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