

Reducing *C. diff* through Environmental Services



Recently Dartmouth-Hitchcock has been focusing on improving the rate of hospital-acquired *C. difficile*. *C. diff* is an infection that causes gastrointestinal distress for patients and can lengthen their stay in the hospital or slow their recovery from other medical concerns. While many work groups have been focused on various factors that contribute to *C. diff* infections, one group that has been instrumental during these efforts is the Environmental Services team. Early on in this initiative, it was determined that one of the major drivers for the spread of *C. diff* in the hospital is related to cleaning practices.

When a patient is suspected to have *C. diff* the technician cleaning that room cannot treat it the same as other room cleanings. *C. diff* spores are killed by bleach and can live on a surface for months. This means that if one surface is missed, *C. diff* could continue to be present in that room when the next patient arrives. The *C. diff* work group includes the manager from Environmental Services and after better understanding the root causes of *C. diff* spread, they designed a Precaution Cleaning Team. This is a team of Environmental Services technicians who have received a higher level of training and were involved in designing new workflow. This new workflow includes team cleaning of precaution rooms - two staff members instead of one clean, allowing for a more efficient and thorough cleaning.

The Environmental Services team continues to participate in improvement pilots that might help to continue to reduce the rate of *C. diff*. Over the course of 18 months, there has been a 55% reduction in hospital-acquired *C. diff* cases at D-H Lebanon, and the belief is that the new cleaning practices will help to continue that trend. Next, the team will also be looking at the layout of the technician supply carts, hoping to standardize and label appropriately. This will continue to be helpful in *C. diff* reduction and in their regular daily workflow.