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Infection Control Hospital Epidemiology





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CONTENTS

Original Articles

- **999** Building and Validating a Computerized Algorithm for Surveillance of Ventilator-Associated Events *Tal Mann, Joseph Ellsworth, Najia Huda, Anupama Neelakanta, Thomas Chevalier, Kristin L. Sims, Sorabh Dhar, Mary E. Robinson and Keith S. Kaye*
- **1004** Natural Language Processing for Real-Time Catheter-Associated Urinary Tract Infection Surveillance: Results of a Pilot Implementation Trial *Westyn Branch-Elliman, Judith Strymish, Valmeek Kudesia, Amy K. Rosen and Kalpana Gupta*
- 1011 Seasonal Variation of Common Surgical Site Infections: Does Season Matter? Michael J. Durkin, Kristen V. Dicks, Arthur W. Baker, Sarah S. Lewis, Rebekah W. Moehring, Luke F. Chen, Daniel J. Sexton and Deverick J. Anderson
- 1017 Evaluation of the Quality of Reprocessing of Gastrointestinal Endoscopes Philippe Saviuc, Romain Picot-Guéraud, Jacqueline Shum Cheong Sing, Pierre Batailler, Isabelle Pelloux, Marie-Pierre Brenier-Pinchart, Valérie Dobremez and Marie-Reine Mallaret
- 1024 Excess Length of Stay Attributable to *Clostridium difficile* Infection (CDI) in the Acute Care Setting: A Multistate Model
 Vanessa W. Stevens, Karim Khader, Richard E. Nelson, Makoto Jones, Michael A. Rubin, Kevin A. Brown, Martin E. Evans, Tom Greene, Eric Slade and Matthew H. Samore
- **1031** Hospital Transfer Network Structure as a Risk Factor for *Clostridium difficile* Infection Jacob E. Simmering, Linnea A. Polgreen, David R. Campbell, Joseph E. Cavanaugh and Philip M. Polgreen
- 1038 Clostridium difficile Infection Among Veterans Health Administration Patients Yinong Young-Xu, Jennifer L. Kuntz, Dale N. Gerding, Julia Neily, Peter Mills, Erik R. Dubberke, Margaret A. Olsen, Ciarán P. Kelly and Cédric Mahé
- 1046 Low Yield of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus Screening in Hemodialysis Patients: 10 Years' Experience
 H. M. Gebreselassie, T. Kaspar, S. Droz and J. Marschall
- **1050** Transmission of Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) to Healthcare Worker Gowns and Gloves During Care of Nursing Home Residents *Mary-Claire Roghmann, J. Kristie Johnson, John D. Sorkin, Patricia Langenberg, Alison Lydecker, Brian Sorace, Lauren Levy and Lona Mody*
- **1058** Whole Genome Sequencing in Real-Time Investigation and Management of a *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* Outbreak on a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit *Rebecca J. Davis, Slade O. Jensen, Sebastiaan Van Hal, Björn Espedido, Adrienne Gordon, Rima Farhat and Raymond Chan*
- **1065** Factors Influencing Antibiotic-Prescribing Decisions Among Inpatient Physicians: A Qualitative Investigation Daniel Livorsi, Amber Comer, Marianne S. Matthias, Eli N. Perencevich and Matthew J. Bair

Review Articles

1073 Healthcare Laundry and Textiles in the United States: Review and Commentary on Contemporary Infection Prevention Issues Lynne M. Sehulster 1089 The Magnitude of Time-Dependent Bias in the Estimation of Excess Length of Stay Attributable to Healthcare-Associated Infections
 Richard E. Nelson, Scott D. Nelson, Karim Khader, Eli L. Perencevich, Marin L. Schweizer, Michael A. Rubin, Nicholas Graves, Stephan Harbarth, Vanessa W. Stevens and Matthew H. Samore

Concise Communications

- 1095 Chlorhexidine Only Works If Applied Correctly: Use of a Simple Colorimetric Assay to Provide Monitoring and Feedback on Effectiveness of Chlorhexidine Application Laura Supple, Monika Kumaraswami, Sirisha Kundrapu, Venkata Sunkesula, Jennifer L. Cadnum, Michelle M. Nerandzic, Myreen Tomas and Curtis J. Donskey
- 1098 Prospective Validation of Central Line–Days Derived From an Electronic Medical Record System John M. Boyce, George Paci, Carl Feidner, Lori Hubbard, Laurie Devin, Lenore Reilly, Anthony Gentile, Jonathan M. Siner
- **1100** The Use of Channel-Purge Storage for Gastrointestinal Endoscopes Reduces Microbial Contamination *Philippe Saliou, Franck Cholet, Julien Jézéquel, Michel Robaszkiewicz, Hervé Le Bars and Raoul Baron*
- **1103** Evaluation of Outpatient Parenteral Antimicrobial Therapy at a Veterans Affairs Hospital *Emily Sydnor Spivak, Brian Kendall, Patricia Orlando, Christian Perez, Marina De Amorim, Matthew Samore, Andrew T. Pavia and Adam L. Hersh*

Research Briefs

- Secular Trends in Central Line-Associated Bloodstream Infection: Microbiological Pattern of Pathogens after Preventive Measures
 Priscila Gonçalves, Fernando G. Menezes, Alexandra R. Toniolo, Claudia V. Silva, Maria Fatima S. Cardoso, Julia Y. Kawagoe, Camila M. Santos, Helena Maria F. Castagna, Marines D. V. Martino and Luci Correa
- 1108 Impact of Contact Isolation Precautions on Multi-Drug Resistant Acinetobacter baumannii in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit
 Adam Tawney, Lynn Semproch, Paul Lephart, Kevin Valentine, Ronald Thomas, Basim I. Asmar, Teena Chopra and Eric J. McGrath

Letters to the Editor

- 1111 Central-Line–Associated Bloodstream Infection Caused by Sporobolomyces salmonicolor Hung-Jen Tang, Chih-Cheng Lai and Chien-Ming Chao
- 1112 Emergence of a Novel Binary Toxin–Positive Strain of *Clostridium difficile* Associated With Severe Diarrhea That Was Not Ribotype 027 and 078 in China *Chunhui Li, Sidi Liu, Pengcheng Zhou, Juping Duan, Qingya Dou, Rui Zhang, Hong Chen, Ying Cheng and Anhua Wu*
- 1114 Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*: More Attention Should Be Paid in Mainland China *Hui Peng, Qiang Hu, Xiu-Bin Tao and Ying-Shui Yao*
- 1115 Importance of Air Particle Counts in Hospital Infection Control: Insights From a Cancer Center in Eastern India Ramkrishna Bhalchandra, Sanjay Bhattacharya, Jeeva Ratnam Soundaranayagam, Subrata Garai and Mammen Chandy
- 1117 Procalcitonin Is Not Useful to Discriminate Between Infectious and Noninfectious CRP Elevation in Patients with Non–Small Cell Lung Cancer Katrin Scheinpflug, Enrico Schalk, Elske Grabert and H. Jost Achenbach
- **1118** The Slippery Slope of Mandatory Quarantine for Healthcare Workers with Exposure to Ebola—Let's Do the Math *Gary P. Wormser and Eugene D. Shapiro*
- **1119** Short- and Long-Term Effects of a Challenge Dose of Hepatitis B Vaccine in Individuals With and Without Residual Anti-HBs *Vladimir Gilca, Nicole Boulianne, Donald Murphy and Gaston De Serres*

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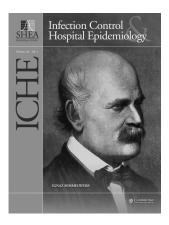
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About the cover:



Starting in 2015, the cover format of each volume of Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology will highlight one of the many professionals throughout history who not only recognized how disease might be spread, but also how epidemiological principles could be applied to reduce healthcare associated infections.

Ignaz Semmelweis (1818-1865) was a Hungarian physician who was appointed an assistant in obstetrics at the Allgemeines Krankenhaus in Vienna. He recognized that women delivered by midwife trainees were significantly less likely to die of puerperal fever than those delivered by physicians or medical students. He hypothesized that puerperal fever could be spread to mothers at the time of delivery by the hands of obstetricians that became contaminated while performing autopsies on women who had died in the maternity ward. Controlled trials of hand washing with chloride of lime solution and disinfection of instruments showed that he could reduce infections among the women cared for by physicians by almost 20-fold. Unfortunately, he did not publish his findings which contributed to the lack of acceptance of antisepsis among senior staff;

Semmelweis' academic appointment was not renewed. He left for Budapest, but his beliefs failed to gain traction among colleagues in Hungary. Semmelweis' increasingly erratic and angry behavior led to commitment to an asylum; he died there within a few short weeks at the age of 47 years. Contrary to legend, Semmelweis' autopsy suggests that he did not die of streptococcal gangrene, but rather of trauma related to beatings inflicted by the guards at the asylum and an early Alzheimer-type dementia.

Correction Notice:

One of our loyal readers of Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology recently notified us that the traditional spelling of the surname of Ignaz Semmelweiss is actually Semmelweis. Although instances exist with alternate versions of his surname being spelled (Semmelweiss vs. Semmelweis), upon review the dominant majority of references use the traditional spelling. Cambridge would like to apologize for this oversight that we introduced and we have updated the cover and text accordingly. Our thanks to the reader for bringing this to our attention.

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