

REDUCING HEALTH CARE-ASSOCIATED INFECTIONS THE JAMES M. JEFFORDS INSTITUTE FOR QUALITY & OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS



As part of our organization's efforts to improve the quality and safety of patient care, Fletcher Allen has introduced an organization-wide strategic initiative to reduce the incidence of health care-associated infections, implementing four goals:

- To improve tracking and reporting of three specific infections – Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), a bacterial infection that is resistant to some antibiotics; *Clostridium difficile* (*C. difficile*), a bacterial infection that can lead to a severe infection of the colon; and primary bloodstream infections.
- To begin mandatory training of medical residents about health care-associated infections and multi-drug-resistant organisms.
- To develop a nurse advocate educational program, in which 26 medical/surgical unit nurses are given 16 hours of infection-prevention training.
- To enhance the training and monitoring of environmental service workers' cleaning practices.

As a result of these efforts, we have achieved a 15% decline in MRSA, *C. difficile* and primary bloodstream infections. This is especially impressive since our baseline for these infections was already well below the national average.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Our Environmental Services staff has implemented a number of strategies aimed at improving the way they clean areas around the organization.

One of these efforts involves applying fluorescent marks to “high-touch” surfaces in patient rooms, such as the television remote, before the rooms are cleaned. After they are cleaned, the supervisor reviews the marked surfaces with a special black light, which highlights in fluorescent light the areas where there are still infectious organisms present after cleaning.

Using the black light has resulted in nearly 90% of patient room surfaces being effectively cleaned. In addition, patient satisfaction with room cleanliness, as measured by our Press Ganey surveys, has improved.

Fletcher Allen's volunteers are also playing an important role in the organization's efforts to reduce health care-associated infections. This year, volunteer Nate Hicks, a UVM junior (pictured above), observed and documented how well providers on our inpatient units are complying with handwashing regulations, helping to identify areas needing improvement.