**VA National Center for Patient Safety**

**March 20, 2015**

**Time 3:39**

**Music Builds/Fades**

Joe

This podcast is being brought to you by the VA National Center for Patient Safety. I’m Joe Murphy, public affairs officer, your host. Today I am going to be interviewing Dawn Sillars, who has written an article in our March/April 2015, TIPS, “Health Care-Associated Infections: A Persistent Patient Safety Issue.”

So Dawn, why did you pick this topic?

Dawn

Well, thanks Joe. There’s a surprising statistic that 75,000 patients per year die as a result of health care- associated infections, which is actually more than breast cancer, prostate cancer and cervical cancer combined. So when you think about those cancers that have a lot of media exposure, most people don’t even have health care-associated infections on their radar.

Joe

Well, Dawn, were you surprised by anything when you were doing the research for this article?

Dawn

The most surprising information was from a recently published study on C.difficile. And C.difficile is a gastro-intestinal infection. So one example of information that was in this study is that one-in-five people who contract C.difficile will experience a reoccurrence.

And the also within 30 days, 10 percent of patients who had contracted the disease will have succumb to the disease in that time period.

And one final example that was surprising from this study was that patients who are 65 or greater contract C.difficile at a rate that is about nine times higher than those that are under the age of 65.

Joe

What in particular, Dawn would you like reader so take away from this article?

Dawn

There are two things that have been shown to decrease the number of health care-associated infections. And those two things are hand hygiene and antibiotic stewardship.

So antibiotic stewardship is giving people the correct antibiotic for the infection, giving them the right dose through the right route, and for the right amount of time.

And as for a patient, we need to make sure that we don’t ask for antibiotics when it’s not appropriate, and to take them as long as they have been prescribed. So that means that we wouldn’t discontinue them when we start feeling better, we would take them the entire time they have been prescribed.

So as far as hand hygiene goes, health care providers need to follow recommended hand hygiene guidelines. For instance, they need to wash their hands after removing gloves. And this is because gloves may develop small tears that may not be easily seen.

And also, for instance, with the C.difficile, alcohol hand rub, that you see on the walls where they squirt a bit in their hands, and they don’t need to use water, that does not actually work to deactivate the spores of C.difficile. So you need to use soap and water.

Joe

So Dawn, is there anything else you would like to say about this issue before we end this podcast?

Dawn

Yes, as you will note in the article, the VA implemented several successful initiatives designed to protect patients from these dangerous infections and improve patient safety efforts.

**Music Builds**

Joe

This podcast has been brought to you by the VA National Center for Patient Safety, thanks for listening

**Music Fades**