

# Guest Editorial

## Infection *Prevention and Control*

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In home care and hospice, the term “infection control” is most commonly used. What we need to do is move toward a focus on *preventing* infections rather than just controlling them. This year, October 14-20, 2007 is International Infection Prevention and Control Week. This is an annual event that began in 1986 when President Ronald Reagan proclaimed the third week in October as National Infection Control Week and called on all “federal, state, and local government agencies, health organizations, communications, media, and people” to take part in educational activities and programs during this designated week. This year’s theme is “Infection Prevention—It’s in Your Hands,” and as we all know, that is the number 1 way to prevent infections.

One of the challenges in preventing infections is that home care and hospice staff are not the only ones performing patient care activities. Staff-trained family members may perform wound care, or the home care patient may go out to receive dialysis or have treatments performed in outpatient settings, with other health-care professionals rendering patient care. One of the most important things we can teach our patients are how to perform patient care in a manner that does not contribute to patient infections and how to prevent infections. This includes empowering patients to ask staff members if they have washed their hands before performing hands-on care if they have not observed them doing so. It is not only through prevention, but also through control, education, surveillance, and reporting activities that we strive to protect our patients and fellow staff members.

An important prevention activity is preparing our patients and staff for seasonal influenza by promoting influenza immunization. This issue of *Home Healthcare Nurse* includes an article about commonsense strategies to make sure that plans are set for managing a pandemic influenza outbreak. Several other articles in this issue focus on the importance of infection prevention. Dr. Talsma discusses the major challenge of biofilm production,

### 2008

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its contribution to infection related to the use of an indwelling medical device, and the importance of preventing its formation. Kathleen Gold and Jenny Schumann discuss the importance of preventing needlesticks through the proper disposal of used sharps. Finally, Emily Rhinehart and I review the new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidelines on the *Management of Multidrug-Resistant Organisms in Healthcare Settings* and how these Guidelines can be implemented to prevent and control the transmission of multidrug-resistant organisms in home care and hospice.

As we move forward and plan for 2008, take a look at the themed issues lined up for next year's issues of *Home Healthcare Nurse* and consider sharing your knowledge and expertise with others.

Working with you to eliminate preventable infections—

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## NIA Offers New Spanish-Language WEB SITE

Accurate, up-to-date information on health issues affecting Hispanic seniors is now available online in Spanish from the National Institute on Aging (NIA), part of the National Institutes of Health.

The user-friendly Web site has information on a wide range of health topics, including diseases such as Alzheimer's, cancer and diabetes. Helpful tips on choosing a doctor and maintaining a healthy lifestyle also are available at [www.nia.nih.gov/Espanol](http://www.nia.nih.gov/Espanol).

The Web site offers free publications in Spanish, as well as links to other health-related, Spanish-language Web sites such as Medicare and MedlinePlus. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit <http://www.nih.gov>.

**SOURCE:** <http://www.nih.gov/news/pr/sep2007/nia-07.htm>.