



Bug Day 2007: The Continuing Threat of Infectious Diseases

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Contained in this issue of *The Canadian Journal of CME* are numerous articles that arose from presentations at the Winnipeg Health Sciences Centre's 11th Annual Bug Day, held on October 16, 2007. Bug Day is a day-long academic program and Manitoba's largest educational event for healthcare providers, with 1,200 to 1,500 individuals attending in person or at one of 36 Telehealth sites located in remote and rural communities.

Bug Day focuses on topics of importance and interest in infectious diseases, public health and infection prevention and control. But why should we care about any of these topics? The answer to this question is quite simple. Infectious diseases, particularly those which were once felt to be eradicated and essentially non-existent, may not have actually been eradicated and some which were quiescent have made a resurgence. To appreciate the importance of infections and infectious diseases, particularly in the community, one needs only open the local newspaper or a national tabloid.

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Over the past year, we have observed how our food supply is vulnerable to contamination, specifically how carrot juice, chocolates, lettuce and other vegetables have been contaminated by a number of different microorganisms, such as *Clostridium botulinum*, *Salmonella spp* and *Shigella spp* respectively, to name a few. *E. Coli* O157:H7, the etiologic agent for "hamburger disease," continues to make its rounds during the summer. Without fail, bed bugs will appear in subsidized housing; scabies and lice will ravage school children, healthcare workers and those living in shelters for the homeless. Mumps has reappeared

and travellers brought measles to Canada. How can one forget the stir created by a lawyer with tuberculosis who deliberately evaded international authorities and travelled throughout the world?

We cannot avoid discussions about *C. difficile* and its impact upon both the healthcare environment and the community. When we consider the healthcare environment, some of Canada's largest hospitals have modified their screening policies for the detection of persons infected or colonized with methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). These changes in screening policies have appeared on the front page of our national newspapers. There are an increasing number of reports in the lay media about community-associated MRSA, a highly virulent microorganism responsible for skin abscesses in those that have not had previous exposure to healthcare environments.

We cannot avoid and must not forget infectious diseases as an important cause of morbidity and possibly even mortality. It is for these reasons that Bug Day exists; it reminds us about the importance of infectious diseases, infection prevention, infection control and public health.

In an attempt to inspire heightened awareness of techniques whereby infections can be

prevented, the Health Sciences Centre's very own orange-clad, germ-fighting superhero, Soapy (also known as John Embil, MD), leapt into action with countless assistants to try and spread the word about the importance of basic hygienic measures to protect healthcare workers and to prevent the spread of infections within the healthcare environment.

At Bug Day 2007, Soapy rolled out an instructional video highlighting "The **SOAPY**:"

- **Stop!**: When in doubt about the potential for the transmission of infection during what you are doing or are about to do, stop and undertake a risk assessment. This risk assessment is critical to determine whether there is a possibility of acquiring an infectious agent or spreading that infectious agent
- **Organize**: Organize your thoughts. Specifically, if you are uncertain how to prevent the spread of infectious agents and infection, refer to your *Infection Prevention and Control Manual* for guidance
- **Apply Practices**: This refers to the application of "Routine Practices," a series of measures that can be undertaken to prevent the spread of infectious agents. For more information about routine practices, refer to the Public Health Agency of

Canada's website (<http://www.nosocomial.ca>) and review the document entitled "Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Healthcare"

- **Yay!**: This is an exclamation of joy indicating that, by doing The SOAPY, we have successfully prevented the transmission of infections within the healthcare environment

In addition to the instructional video, a calendar has also been created, highlighting a different principle of infection prevention and control for each month. This serves to remind us that infection prevention and control is a year-long event, not just one to be practiced during Infection Control Week. A limited number of calendars are available. For more information, please contact Soapy at jembil@hsc.mb.ca.

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