



Innovators Award Introduction – Helen Beigel

I have been a nurse for 25 years. For most of that time I have worked at Long Island Jewish Hospital, which is part of Northwell Health. Like many nurses, I first encountered C. diff in the early days of my career, working in oncology. Due to their low immunity, as well as chemotherapy and antibiotic use, cancer patients are susceptible to a range of infections including C. diff. At the time, C. diff was considered a nuisance infection that preyed on the elderly and immune suppressed. Back then a doctor would prescribe a course of antibiotics and, most of the time that would clear it right up. Not a big deal. Eventually, I moved into a more administrative role away from daily patient care.

C. diff came roaring back into my life tragically on April 20, 2010 when my sister Peggy was admitted to the hospital with acute diarrhea. My nephew Christian was worried about her, so he asked me to come meet them. Shortly after I arrive, the ER and Infectious Disease attending told us that Peggy had toxic megacolon, which they believed was caused by C. diff. “C. diff?” I was completely blown away. “How can my sister have C. diff? She’s a healthy, 56-year-old.”

The doctors weren’t sure where she picked up the bacteria but they felt certain the antibiotics she’d be taking for root canal had led to the infection. We brought her in on a Tuesday morning and by Wednesday night she was gone. It is a special kind of sadness when you lose a close sibling. We were only two years apart. There were experiences and private jokes that only her and I shared. To this day if we were together and someone brought up ballerinas we would have been on the floor laughing.

Starting in the early 2000s, C. diff has been evolving into a more dangerous and more widespread problem. More and more, we see cases like my sister. People who visit a healthcare facility and later come down with C. diff. That’s what it’s imperative that healthcare systems like tonight’s Innovator award recipients can change practices to reduce as much as possible the number of hospital-acquired C. diff cases.

Since we lost Peggy nearly 7 years ago, Christian, Liam and I and thousands of other people have joined the movement to fight C. diff through education and advocacy. I’m proud to say that my Northwell colleagues are leading the way on i n n o v a t i o n .

The *CDIFFerently Care Team* was started by nursing staff on the 6 Monti Unit of North



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Shore University Hospital. 6 Monti is a 30-bed medical/surgical unit with a subspecialty of renal transplantation. In addition, the unit cares for patients on dialysis and has a high volume of oncology patients. The unique population of includes immune-compromised patients who are highly susceptible to hospital-acquired infections.

In assessing their infection data from 2014, the staff realized that they had 14 hospital-acquired C. diff infections. Knowing how dangerous C. diff can be to their patients, they set about educating staff and creating a multidisciplinary team to change our 6 Monti's process of caring for patients with C. diff. They changed just about everything from who should be tested, how to isolate a patient who came back positive with the bacteria, peer to peer competencies on hand washing and donning and doffing protective clothing, and most importantly how we educate our patients and their loved ones on this infection. The CDIFFerently Team worked with patient logistics, environmental services, material operations (for creation of isolation packets), and infection control to help improve our process.

By the end of 2015, one year after starting CDIFFerently, the team reduced C. diff rates by 50 percent! Overall, 6 Monti has had a seventy-five percent reduction in Clostridium Difficile rates since the start of the program. The team is now spreading their knowledge and not C. diff across the hospital.

Please join me in welcoming Tara Jamieson and Katelyn Fenwick of the CDIFFerently Care Team, our 2016 Innovator Award recipient.



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