



Peggy Lillis Foundation

Fighting C. diff through Education and Advocacy

Leadership Award Introduction – Christian Lillis

I'm really excited about this next award. As Liam mentioned, it's the first time we're honoring an organization for its Leadership in combating C. diff infections. You've probably noticed that we're in the midst of a heated Presidential election. In the brief moments when the media isn't obsessing about the latest scandal, pundits focus on which candidate will make the best leader for our country. Regardless of where you fall on the political spectrum or which candidate you're supporting, I'm certain you agree that leadership ability is incredibly important in a US president.

Leadership is just as important when it comes to combating C. diff infections. Since we started the Peggy Lillis Foundation, we've had the opportunity to work with some of the country's best healthcare systems. From NYU Medical Center here in New York to the Hospital Corporation of American in Tennessee and Mercy Health System in St. Louis, a key factor in reducing C. diff infections is a strong commitment by senior leaders. Another success factor is ensuring that leadership exists at all levels so every department understands its role in reducing CDI. See, it's not enough to just have the executives sign off on increasing the environmental services budget or hiring more nursing aides – though that is critically important. To be successful, it takes leadership by nurses, janitorial staff, administration, and, of course, doctors.

In January, Dr. Brian Koll invited me to speak at Mount Sinai's C. diff Leadership Retreat. Brian is the executive director for infection prevention for Mount Sinai. He's also been a longtime friend of the Peggy Lillis Foundation. As some of you know, one of our earliest projects was to produce a public service announcement and educational video. We really wanted to include the perspective of an infection prevention specialist. I forget exactly how I was referred to Brian, who then had a similar role at Beth Israel, but he was kind enough to agree to participate. Keep in mind that PLF was less than a year old at the time. We had one fundraiser under our belt and a little website built using Wix. But Brian really cares about fighting C. diff, so he let us come to his office and interview him. He took me out to lunch and spent about two hours answering all my questions.

Brian said something that day that has stayed with me and which I've repeated many times over the past 6 years. What he said was "when we're trying to



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prevent infections, our goal always have to be zero. We may never get there but that has to be goal." What he was saying, in essence, is that if you believe there's an acceptable number of infections, you will definitely have that many and probably a lot more.

I can't tell you how much it meant to me to hear that. Back in 2011, there was a lot of complacency around C. diff in the healthcare industry. C. diff wasn't being reported by hospitals. There were no sanctions for high rates. So to have this leading doctor affirm our vision that a world where C. diff is rare was a huge morale boost.

So when he asked me to come and speak to the Leadership of Mount Sinai, I was both thrilled and humbled. The retreat brought together leaders from all across the system's 7 hospitals to focus on reducing C. diff infections. They had management gurus talking about gap analysis, nurses and environmental services sharing how to collaborate so patient rooms and equipment are clean, pharmacy leadership discussing antibiotic stewardship. There was no doubt this was an incredibly robust and thorough program. And they asked me to come and help them get grounded in their purposes – protecting patients from C. diff – by sharing Moms' story.

That morning I met Dr. Jeremy Boal. Dr. Boal is Mount Sinai's Chief Medical Officer. He kicked off retreat by welcoming everyone and sharing the goals of the C. diff strategic initiative. Dr. Boal spoke about the importance of protecting vulnerable patients from C. diff. In his view, as long as patients coming into Mount Sinai are at risk for C. diff and other infections, they weren't doing their job. So Mount Sinai has declared "all out war" on C. diff.

I'm so pleased to say that the leadership of Dr. Boal and Dr. Koll, as well as the leadership of all the hard working staff at Mount Sinai's 7 hospitals has resulted in a 40% reduction in C. diff infections since last year. This has saved the hospital more than \$3 million as well as prevented pain and suffering for so many of its patients.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Jeremy Boal, Chief Medical Officer of Mount Sinai Health System, our 2016 Leadership Award recipient.