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**Picnic Do’s and Don’ts**

Planning an outdoor event this summer? Check out “Bugs-R-Us” from Geisinger’s Microbiology Laboratory for some helpful picnic tips to keep you healthy this summer.

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**Rater Survey**

Thank you to all that provided feedback to the Infection Control and Prevention department by completing our Rater Survey! Your comments are always appreciated and we strive to improve our performance year after year!

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**LVHN Community Flu Campaign - Save the Date!**

The 15th annual LVHN Community Drive Thru Flu Campaign and food drive will be held on November 3 at Dorney Park in Allentown and November 4 at Coca Cola Park (Iron Pigs Stadium) in Allentown both days from 9am-3pm. The call for volunteers will be sent soon so please Save the Date!

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**The 4th Annual Fleming Infection Prevention and Infectious Diseases Symposium**

Registration will soon be open for this year’s Fleming Infection Prevention and Infectious Diseases Symposium to be held on Friday, October 5, 2012 in the LVH-CC Kasych Pavilion. This year’s theme is *Break the Chain of Infection.* The impressive list of speakers includes Dr. Julie Gerberding, Dr. Bennett Lorber, Denise Murphy, RN, Russell Nassof, Esq., Dr. Ed Septimus, and Dr. Tom Talbot.
Quantiferon Gold TB Tests

Isolation: It is not always necessary to isolate patients when a Quantiferon Gold TB test (QFT-G) is ordered or when the QFT-G is resulted as positive. Only patients that are at risk, or demonstrate signs and symptoms of active Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB) disease require placement in Airborne Precautions. These include cough greater than 2 weeks, coughing up blood, unexplained night sweats or weight loss; and exposure to or a history of TB. Contact the ordering physician and/or an Infection Preventionist if the patients demonstrate signs and symptoms of active disease to determine if isolation is required. A CXR can also assist in determining if the patient has active TB disease.

Proper Collection Technique SAVES Time and Money: Please remember to SHAKE the collection tube VIRGOROUSLY until the blood froths (foams). Simply inverting the tube is not sufficient and will make the test results invalid. Repeat testing delays access to critical information for the physician.

Food Trays and the Transmission of Infection

The potential for food trays to play a role in the transmission of infection has been hotly debated. There is no evidence to demonstrate that food trays are the source of healthcare associated infections and therefore no special requirements are needed to handle food trays from patients on isolation. However, there is evidence to demonstrate that microorganisms are transferred to patients from the hands of healthcare workers. Therefore, staff is instructed to follow Standard Precautions and perform hand hygiene before and after all patient contact. Hand hygiene prevents the transmission of transient organisms….whether encountered on computer keyboards, an IV pole or a food tray, from being transferred to patients. The Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) does not recommend any special handling for food trays, but firmly endorses strict adherence to hand hygiene.

Pet Therapy and Pet Visitation

Hand Hygiene and Pet Therapy/Visitation: Animals that participate in pet therapy and pet visitation are also susceptible to the microorganisms that infect patients. Therefore hand hygiene is just as important to protect the pet as it is to protect the patient. The “Pet Therapy” policy in the Infection Control and Prevention manual has been revised to include that hand hygiene should be practiced before (as well as after) any animal contact. Cleaning your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based waterless hand sanitizer prior to touching the pet provides protection for the pet, disinfecting your hands after touching the pet provides protection for you and our patients.

An important reminder that visits from personnel pets is prohibited at all times. The only pets that may visit LVHN are service animals and therapy pets. In extenuating circumstances a patient’s personal pet may be given permission to visit. All approved pet visits must have written permission and appropriate immunization documentation as detailed in the Administrative Policy “Pet Visitation/Service Animals”.

Misuse of Linen

Linen Services continues to identify loss of linens especially washcloths. These are NOT to be used for environmental cleaning at any time. In addition please be cautious to assure linen is not being placed in the trash.

Eating/Drinking in Patient Care Areas

Reminder: Healthcare personnel (HCP) may not eat or drink in patient care areas. Eating and drinking in patient care areas by HCP is a violation of the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogen Standard, The Joint Commission and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).
Infectious Diseases Alert: Pertussis and West Nile Virus

**Pertussis** transmission is very active throughout the country reaching record highs. Numerous cases in children, adolescents and adults have been observed throughout the greater Lehigh Valley Health. Pertussis is a highly transmissible disease that can be fatal to infants and young children who are not fully vaccinated. The effect of the vaccine wears off over time leaving adolescents and adults susceptible to infection and in turn capable of transmitting it unknowingly to infants and young children. The vaccine Tdap was introduced several years ago to help further protect susceptible infants and children by helping to prevent the infection in adolescents and adults.

**Pertussis Vaccine Recommended for Healthcare Personnel:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended all healthcare personnel receive a one-time booster of Tdap. Anyone who has patient contact and wishes to be vaccinated can obtain the vaccine free of charge through Employee Health Services. To date over 2,000 current employees with patient contact have been vaccinated with Tdap. Several departments who care for pediatric and pregnant patients have close to a 100% immunization rate, including the day care center.

**Infection Control Practices to Prevent Transmission of Pertussis:** Any patient that presents with a febrile respiratory illness or suspicion of Pertussis should be placed on Droplet Precautions which includes the use of a surgical mask by healthcare personnel. Close unprotected exposure (face to face) to respiratory secretions of a person with Pertussis requires antimicrobial prophylaxis to prevent infection and further transmission. This underscores the need to proactively wear a mask and adhere to Droplet Precautions.

The following recommendations have been made for providers:
1. Consider pertussis in any coughing presentation
2. Test of choice is NP swab (same as used for flu) for "Pertussis PCR"
3. Treat empirically with azithromycin pending PCR results.
4. Wear a surgical mask while evaluating patients with cough
5. Instruct patient in cough hygiene: keep cough covered and good hand hygiene
6. Avoid respiratory therapy treatments in suspected cases to lessen the transmission risk to others

For more detailed information click on the link to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s website http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/

**West Nile Virus (WNV)** is endemic (prevalent) in most areas of the country and causes sporadic and focal outbreaks. Since 1999 more than 30,000 people have become ill with West Nile Virus. The infection is transmitted primarily to humans through the bites of infected mosquitoes. Although most infections are asymptomatic, some manifest as a systemic febrile illness and less commonly as a neuroinvasive disease (meningoencephalitis).

In Pennsylvania, the mild winter of 2011-2012 contributed to an earlier emergence of mosquito populations. Monitoring of WNV infected mosquitoes demonstrates a significantly higher prevalence than in previous years. Therefore the risk of WNV transmission to humans is expected to remain high over the next few months. Prevention efforts include suppression of mosquito populations, elimination of standing water that support mosquito breeding and use of an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellent on clothing and skin especially from dusk to dawn when mosquitoes are most active.

More information on all of these diseases is available at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov.
Welcome new Infection Preventionist, Alida Ammon!

Alida Ammon has joined the Infection Control and Prevention department as a full time Infection Preventionist. Alida’s career in Infection Control began in 1993 and she comes to LVHN from Sacred Heart Hospital where she worked as an Infection Control Practitioner. Alida received her Master’s degree from Desales University in 2009. Alida is a member of the Northeastern Infection Control Educators (NICE) organization, a committee that was developed to provide NJ healthcare infection preventionists basic education in infection control. She is the proud grandmother to five month old Elaina!