

What's 'Bugging' You?

Fort Sanders Regional 'germ detectives' track down culprits

Germs -- they're loathsome, filthy creatures. They have a mean streak that just won't let go. Lump 'em together and they'll sneeze up more trouble than you could ever imagine. They're Public Enemy No. 1, and they're gonna get you ...if we don't get them first.

The street-smart "private eyes" of film noir and pulp fiction fame never saw bad guys like this, but Kim Murray and Patricia Jeffers have.

They're not P.I.s., they are I.P.s — or more precisely, infection preventionists — at Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center. These "germ detectives" are registered nurses engaged in preventing infections and tracking infectious diseases wherever bacteria, viruses, and other nasty bugs may hide.

Infection prevention is especially important in the hospital environment. As a member of Covenant Health, Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center is committed to patient safety, which includes preventing hospital-acquired infections. Infection prevention initiatives include hand washing, employee education related to safety and infection control, sharing best practices with other Covenant Health member organizations, and tracking improvements in performance.

Because of these and other initiatives, Covenant Health hospitals consistently exceed national standards in preventing hospital-acquired infections. In addition, a system-wide antibiotic stewardship program focuses on appropriate use of specific medications to lower the risk of antibiotic resistance, a growing worldwide concern.

In observance of International Infection Prevention Week Oct. 13-19, Fort Sanders Regional's dynamic duo of experts helps us understand why *infection prevention is a job for everyone*:

Q: What is the main message you want to communicate during International Infection Prevention Week?

A: Our main message is that every single person has responsibility for the prevention of infections. Doctors, nurses, and infection preventionists are the professionals that people naturally expect to have increased knowledge on the spread of disease. But whether it's in a hospital, a home, an office, school, or other public space, everyone has a hand in stopping the spread of infections to help protect not only ourselves, but those who are most vulnerable: the sick, the young, and the elderly.

Q: What is your role in preventing infections in a hospital setting?

A: Our role is patient safety. We actively look for diseases, not only in our hospital setting, but in the community as well. When a patient presents with a problematic infectious disease, we must isolate, or quarantine, that person. Special protective equipment such as gowns, masks and gloves are used to stop the spread of disease.

Above all, we educate healthcare workers, patients and families to perform hand hygiene — washing or sanitizing our hands — to kill germs that are easily spread through contact between people, or through the environment, like doorknobs and bathroom stalls. Germs are everywhere!

With the introduction of hand sanitizer, people are more aware of hand hygiene, although they need to be reminded of the benefits of thoroughly washing with soap and water when available. It's our job to continue educating people of all ages on the importance of infection prevention and hand washing.

Q: So how are infection preventionists similar to detectives?

A: Infection prevention requires review of charts and other documents that may give us a clue as to whether a patient has a contagious disease or an infection. In the very rare case of an outbreak we track down the patients that were contacted by the original pa-

tient. We then isolate those patients and make sure the infection is completely eradicated before we close the case.

Q: How has your knowledge of infection prevention affected your professional and personal lives?

A: The knowledge we have gained from working in infection prevention helps us understand the impact that healthcare workers have on the patient population. Patient safety is in our hands, ranging from preparation for disasters such as fires or tornados, or preventing harm events like pressure injuries and infections. This attitude carries over into our personal lives. Simple things like hand washing or the way we prepare food protects the safety of our families and friends as well.

Q: What is antibiotic resistance and why is it important for people to be aware of antibiotic over-use?

A: The overuse of antibiotics can lead to bacteria's ability to resist treatment. Recognition of this problem has led to heightened awareness of the potential that one day, antibiotics may be ineffective. Therefore the careful use of the right antibiotic for a specific bacteria and for a specific amount of time is crucial to slowing the resistance of bacteria to antibiotics.

Q: As flu season approaches, how can people avoid getting the flu?

A: Influenza is a viral disease that can cause serious illness, hospitalizations and even death. Vaccination is the best way to avoid getting the flu and preventing its spread. Other measures like covering your mouth when you cough, washing your hands, and staying home when you are sick are simple ways to help prevent outbreaks of disease, including the flu. Again, vaccination of as many individuals as possible will keep flu from spreading.



Fort Sanders Regional infection preventionists Kim Murray and Patricia Jeffers

Keep Hands Clean

Prevent the Spread of Germs

PLAIN

VS.

Antibacterial

Antibacterial soaps are no more effective than regular soap and water for killing disease-causing germs, according to the CDC.

The Scrub Down

<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: white;">1</p> <p>Wet your hands with clean, warm water.</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: white;">2</p> <p>Apply a nickel- or quarter-sized amount of soap to your hands. Rub your hands together until the soap forms a lather and then rub all over the top of your hands, in between your fingers and the area around and under the fingernails.</p>
<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: white;">3</p> <p>Continue rubbing your hands for at least 15 seconds. Imagine singing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: white;">4</p> <p>Rinse your hands well under running water.</p>
<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: white;">5</p> <p>Dry your hands using a paper towel if possible. Then use your paper towel to turn off the faucet and to open the door if needed.</p>	

Courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

We Earned It!

Hospitals can say they're great, but it means a lot more when industry experts back the claim. And experts consistently recognize Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center for quality, patient safety, and advanced medical care.



- "50 Top Cardiovascular Hospitals" by IBM Watson Health
- Designated Comprehensive Stroke and Rehabilitation Center by The Joint Commission and CARF
- American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's Get With The Guidelines®-Stroke Gold Plus Quality Achievement
- "100 Hospitals and Health Systems with Great Oncology Programs" by Becker's Hospital Review
- Accredited Center for Bariatric Surgery
- Pulmonary Hypertension Center of Excellence
- Blue Distinction Center for Bariatrics and Spine Surgery
- Blue Distinction Center+ for Knee Replacement, Hip Surgery, and Maternity Care

