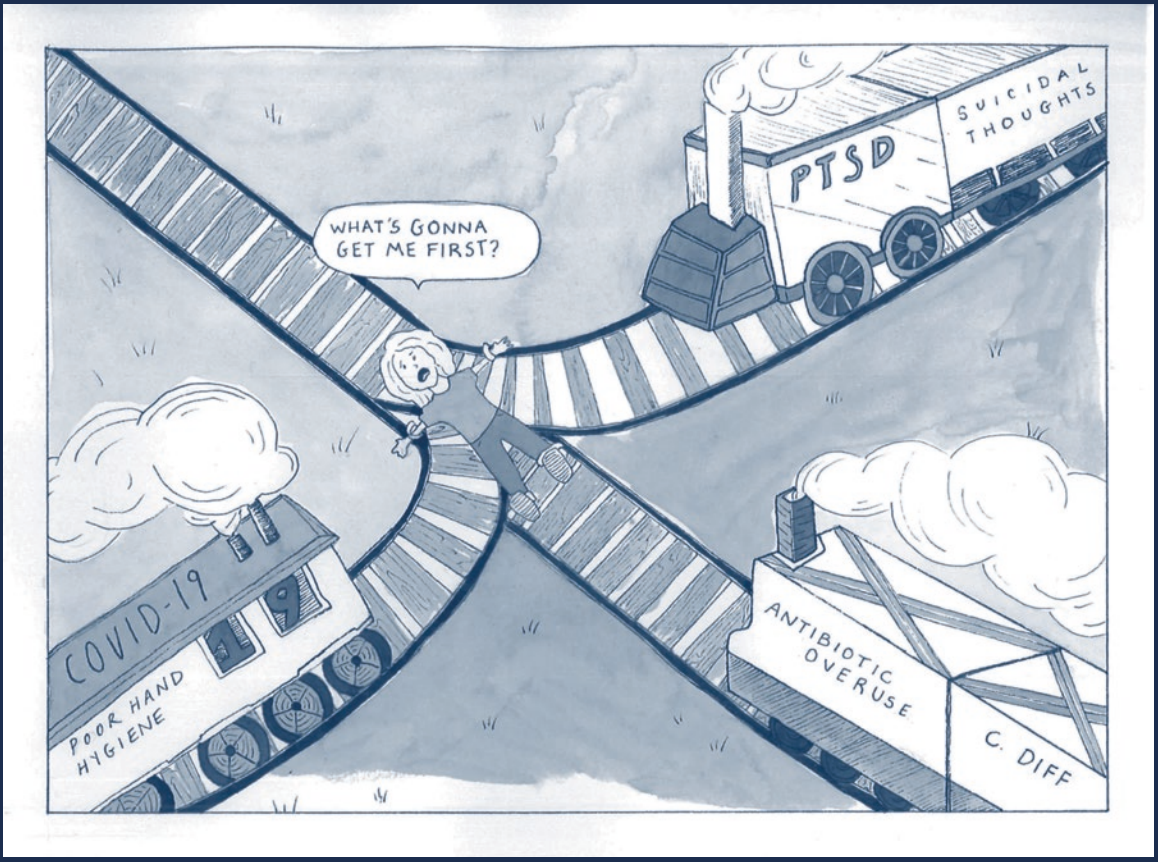
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Volume 47 2026 Number 11

CONTENTS

Commentary

1079 The changing epidemiology of outbreaks due to *Ralstonia spp.*: contamination of commercially manufactured injectables and solutions
Conrad Izydorczyk and Allison McGeer

Review

1084 Facilitators and barriers for implementing infection prevention interventions in long-term care: a scoping review
Ambra Miagostovich, Ina Willemsen, Thera Habben Jansen and Emely de Vet

Original Articles

1094 *Ralstonia pickettii* outbreak in pediatric intensive care units, Peru—2025
Medalit Luna-Vilchez, Mitsi Lorraine Santiago Abal, Humania Aguirre Chávez, Claudia Cristel Marroquín Gálvez, Rosario Inés Huasapoma Ortega, Pool Flores Choque, Jorge Osada, Diana Flores-León, Ronnie G. Gavilan, Lizbeth Vanessa Lozano Lozano and Jorge Luis Salinas

1100 Association between social vulnerability and surgical site infection across surgical procedures
Molly E. Fleece, Russell L. Griffin, Reid M. Eagleson, Robert E. Nichols, Mary M. Duncan, Shiney Isaac, Catina L. James, Allyson G. Hall and Rachael A. Lee

1108 Quantifying the contributions of asymptomatic and symptomatic colonized patients to *Clostridioides difficile* acquisition in oncological units
Savannah Curtis, Mary M. Lee, Tiffany Hink, Kimberly A. Reske, Emily Struttmann, Zainab Hassan Iqbal, Candice Cass, Margaret Olsen, Sankalp Arya, Carey-Ann Burnham, Suzanne Lenhart, Erik Dubberke and Cristina Lanzas

1115 *Candidozyma auris* in the United States: insights from the National Association of Long-Term Hospitals Network
Kim Tran, Mckenzi King, Nidhi Undevia, Lahari Thotapalli, Hannakate Lichota, Lisa Duffner, Alison Peterson, Rachel Medernach, Ronda Cochran, Mary Carl Froilan, Aleksandra Kozicka, Mary K. Hayden and Sarah E. Sansom

1121 Respiratory syndromic surveillance for monitoring infection trends in long-term care facilities
Naoki Takayama, Atsushi Toyoda, Junji Ito, Masahiro Shirai and Yutaro Nakamura

1127 Broad multiplex respiratory panel implementation and antibiotic prescribing in US emergency and urgent care departments: a staggered-adoption study
Mayar Al Mohajer, Kady Phe, Nicholas S. Teran and Todd M. Lasco

Cover image: ***A Victim of Outside Forces,*** **2021**

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1135 Novel antibiotic stewardship metrics and the quality of antibiotic prescribing for lower respiratory and urinary tract infection across 24 VA hospitals
Shungo Imai, Daniel J. Livorsi, Thomas Wright, James Merchant, Hyunkeun Cho, Bruce Alexander and Michihiko Goto

1142 Enhancing urine culture ordering practices through implementation of a urine culture order note at an academic Veterans Affairs medical center
Tyler Luu, Ann Fisher, Louise-Marie Dembry, Andrew Chou, Anthony Pellegrino and Duc Nguyen

Concise Communications

1148 Epidemiological and genomic investigation of a cluster of two *Candida pelliculosa* infections associated with steroid joint injections at an outpatient facility, Michigan, 2022
Elizabeth Misas, Dallas Smith, Muhammad Yasir Nawaz, Sophie Jones, Sara McNamara, Heather Blankenship, Lalitha Gade, Meghan Lyman, Arianna Miles-Jay, Nancy A. Chow, Anastasia P. Litvintseva, Lindsay Alexandra Parnell and Brenda Brennan

1152 Assessing inter-rater agreement within a point prevalence survey of healthcare-associated infections and antimicrobial use in Canadian acute care hospitals
Diane Lee, Jessica J. Bartoszko, Cassandra Lybeck, Susy S. Hota, Michelle Science, Jennifer Ellison, Dominik Mertz, Stephanie Smith, Daniel J.G. Thirion, Olivia Varsaneux and Robyn Mitchell

1156 Risk of carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii* infection in patients with a positive screening test for CRAB in post-acute care hospitals
Vered Schechner, Adi Cohen, Ricki Atanov, Elizabeth Temkin, Samira Masarwa, Reut Efrati Epchtien, Alona Keren-Paz, Yehuda Carmeli and the Israel PACH CRAB

1159 Trends in population attributable risk of *Clostridioides difficile* infection associated with common outpatient antibiotics in Ontario, Canada, 2017–2024
Michelle K. Wong, Nick Daneman, Bradley J. Langford, Valerie Leung, Kevin L. Schwartz and Kevin A. Brown

1163 Assessing feasibility of real-world respiratory virus syndromic surveillance in nursing homes using point-of-care molecular testing
Lisa F. Han, Ivis Perez, Kevin W. McConeghy, David H. Canaday, Elizabeth A. Sillman, Clare Nugent, Tiffany Wallace, Laurel Holland, Evan Dickerson, Olajide Olagunju, Debbie Keresztesy, Yasin Abul, Stefan Gravenstein and H. Edward Davidson

1167 Association between air sampling for viral respiratory pathogens and acute respiratory tract infection cases in the emergency department
Meggie Griffin, Helena Ikenberry, Joshua Gauger, Nicholas Kuehnel, Amy L. Ellis, Ari N. Machtinger, David H. O'Connor, Shelby L. O'Connor, Daniel Shirley and Michael S. Pulia,

1170 A Missouri state-wide assessment of antibiotic appropriateness in outpatient treatment of common bacterial and viral infections
Michael J. Durkin, Katheryn Ney, Noah Chodos, Alice Bewley, Priscilla Kabutey, George Turabelidze, M. Cristina Vazquez Guillamet, John Sahrmann, Corey Lance, Roger Cole, Sena Sayood, Tracey Habrock-Bach and Kevin Hseuh

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Letters to the Editor

1174 A call to action for healthcare epidemiologists and stewards: promoting a transition to transperineal prostate biopsies
Lou Ann Bruno-Murtha and Maria Ordonez

1175 Containing a *Candidozyma* (formerly *Candida*) *auris* outbreak in Institute of Mental Health, Singapore: challenges and strategies for infection prevention and control
Xiqing Lin, Zhanpo Shi, Kalisvar Marimuthu, Raymond Tzer Pin Lin, Michelle Ang, Jonathan Jie Lee, Yehua Liu, Jinxian Feng, Cynthia Qi Yi Mok and Jason Kim Huat Lee

1177 Evaluation of operating room high-touch surface cleaning effectiveness and process optimization based on dual-color fluorescent tracing technology
Zhiqing Liu, Huimei Ge, Haixia Lan, Yan Zeng, Li Zhong, Yunxia Cai and Dejun Xiao,

1179 Negotiation skills and conflict resolution as core competencies for infection prevention and antimicrobial stewardship practitioners: a call to action
Anup Warrier and Nimitha Mohan

Addendum

1181 Are SEP-1 and blood culture stewardship at odds? Retrospective review of SEP-1 failures pre- and during a blood culture bottle shortage – ADDENDUM
Jonathan H. Ryder, Kelly A. Cawcutt, Cynthia Japp and Trevor C. Van Schooneveld

Corrigendum

1182 Implementation of an adaptable semi-automated nonventilator hospital-acquired pneumonia (nvHAP) surveillance system in Swiss acute care hospitals: a feasibility study – CORRIGENDUM
Aline Wolfensberger, Mirjam Faes Hesse, Marc Hany, Claudine Reiber, Anna Müller, Marius Zeeb, Gioele Capoferri, Sabine Kuster, Kai Manuel Adam, Ulrike Schnee-Lach, Laila Elhilali-Keller, Sarah Tschudin-Sutter, Davide Bosetti, Etienne Chalot, Mohamed Abbas, Marie-Céline Zanella, Stephan Harbarth, Jasmin Männer, Fabian Grässli, André Riedel, Domenica Flury, Indrani Sen, Benedikt Wiggli, Danielle Vuichard-Gysin, Walter Zingg and the Swissnoso Group

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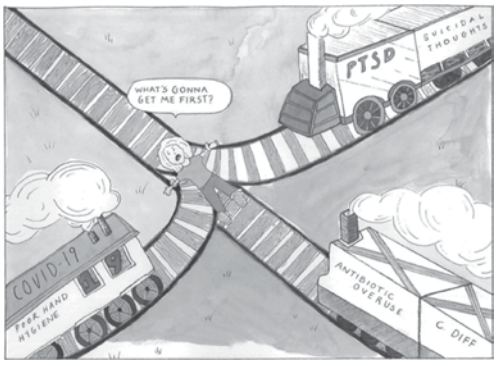
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About the cover:

Beginning with volume 43 (January 2022), the cover of *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology* (ICHE) will feature art inspired by or reflective of topics within the scope of the journal and their impact on patients, healthcare personnel and our society. These topics include healthcare-associated infections, antimicrobial resistance, and healthcare epidemiology. The intent is to feature original artwork that has been created by individuals who have a personal connection to one or more of these topics through their clinical work, research, or experience as a patient or an affected patient's family member, friend or advocate. The goal is to provide readers with a visual reminder of the human impact of the topics addressed in the journal and the importance of the work being done by those who read or contribute to ICHE and by all who are trying to make healthcare safer through the elimination of healthcare-associated infections.

For more information about the ICHE cover and how to submit artwork for consideration for a future cover, please visit the ICHE website: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/infection-control-and-hospital-epidemiology/front-covers

2026



Title: *A Victim of Outside Forces,* 2021
Artist: Lois Bence-Ehlke, RN, BS
Medium: pen and ink sketch

Mrs. Bence-Ehlke spoke to ICHE about her artwork.
What was the inspiration for this artwork?
I am a member of the Patients Engaged in Education and Research (PEER) Group at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. At a meeting in 2021, the group leader encouraged us to think of ways we could use art to highlight the importance of infection prevention in healthcare settings. Not too long after that, I was admitted to a hospital with sepsis. This was relatively early in the COVID-19 pandemic. I saw that the staff were tired and that they had more to do than time to do it. I wondered if I would get the help I needed and worried about getting another infection before I was well enough to go home.

I thought of the idea for this cartoon and sketched it out while I was in my hospital bed. I wanted to make people think about what patients experience while they are in the hospital or receiving medical care in other settings. They are dealing not only with the physical and mental health conditions that initially brought them in but also with many outside forces that may worsen their existing problems or create new ones. These threats include poor hand hygiene by healthcare personnel, overuse of antibiotics, and infections like *C. difficile* and respiratory viruses that can be spread by other patients, healthcare personnel, and the healthcare environment. Patients have little to no control over these forces and may not even be aware of these threats. Even if they are aware of them, many patients are not comfortable raising their concerns to their doctors, nurses, or other care providers. They are simply left to wonder "which of these things is going to get me first?"

What is your personal connection to the content of *ICHE*?
I had a long career as a registered nurse. I began my career as a psychiatry nurse. I was then hired to be the very first infection prevention nurse in a small community hospital after an outbreak of *Staphylococcus aureus* infections occurred in the hospital's newborn nursery. I spent 20 years in infection prevention. During that time, I saw firsthand the many challenges one encounters when trying to implement changes that will make healthcare safer. I also witnessed increasing recognition that healthcare-associated infections are preventable and tremendous growth in our ability to prevent many of these infections. Unfortunately, we still have a long way to go.

Cover image: *A Victim of Outside Forces,* 2021

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In addition to my professional connections to ICHE, I also have personal connections. My first husband developed pneumonia as a complication of leukemia and its treatment. I currently have friends who are unable to live their lives in the way that they want due to recurrent *C. difficile* infections they developed because of antibiotic therapy that may have been unnecessary.

Given the scope of the journal, why is this work appropriate for the cover of *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology*?
This sketch shows, from the patient's perspective, the importance of identifying and eliminating the infection-related threats we all currently experience when we receive health care.

Lois Bence-Ehlke lives in Wisconsin with her two miniature schnauzers. She is a member of the Patient and Family Advisory Council and the Patients Engaged in Education and Research (PEER) Group at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She developed the concept and initial sketch for this comic. It was later enhanced by the PEER coordinator, Sydney Hoel. *The project was supported by the NIH National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS), grant UL1TR002373. The content is solely the responsibility of the artist and does not represent the opinion of the NIH or the University of Wisconsin.*

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