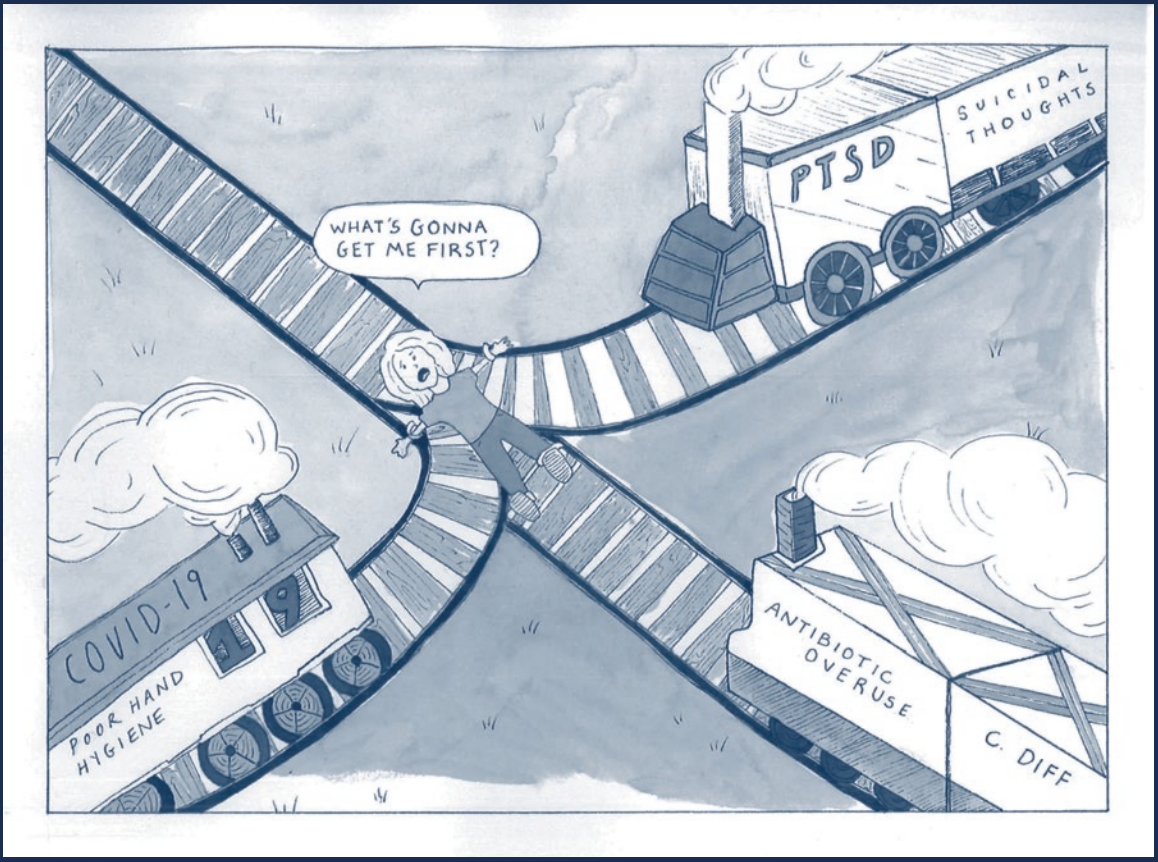
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Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology

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Volume 47 2026 Number 7

CONTENTS

Commentary

651 Discontinuing contact precautions for COVID-19: the science says its time
James M. Jurica, Davey M. Smith, Shira Abeles, Francesca J. Torriani and Daniel A. Sweeney

Original Articles

654 Scaling up improvement: the drive to reduce healthcare-associated infections in public Brazilian intensive care units across all patient ages
Guilherme Cesar Silva Dias Santos, Andrea Keiko Fujinami Gushken, Karen Cristina da Conceição Dias Silva, Rafaela Moraes de Moura, Amanda Brassaroto Gimenes, Flavia Fernanda Franco, Maira Francisco Moya, Cristiana Martins Prandini, Bruno de Melo Tavares, Aline Brenner, Fernanda Pimentel Coelho, Roberta Gonçalves Marques, Livia Muller Bernz, Marianilza Lopes da Silva, Luciana Gouvea de Albuquerque Souza, Admilson Reis da Silva, Giselle Franco Santos, Priscila Martini Bernardi Garzella, Ademir Jose Petenate, Paulo Borem, Cristiane Maria Reis, Luciana Yumi Ue, Claudia Garcia de Barros, and Sebastian Vernal, on behalf of the Saúde em Nossas Mãos collaborative study group

663 Intra-institutional use of positive deviancy in surgical infections in isolated coronary bypass
Fraser Rubens, Yuan Qiu, McKenzie Dean, Jennifer Lajeunesse, Monica Taljaard, Kristen Neilipovitz, Amy Charlebois, Chrystal Hogan, Talal Al-Atassi, Munir Boodhwani, Ming Guo, Hugo Issa, Buu-Khanh Lam, Roy Masters, Marc Ruel, Hadi Toeg and Pierre Voisine

672 Do infection prevention and control messages reach the bedside? A national evaluation of communication and training practices
Esma Eryilmaz Eren, Ayse Yolcu, Can Huseyin Hekimoglu, Dilek Altun, Esen Batır, Safiye Taşgın, Dilek Dulger and Emine Alp Meşe

679 Impact of a patient-facing video on CHG bathing compliance in patients admitted to a bone marrow transplant unit
Staci S. Reynolds, Michael Paasche-Orlow, Aretha Delight Davis, Jennifer Klein, Ali R. Winters, Monique Fleurant, Heather Pena, Mary Susan Moss, Margaret Sturdivant and Angelo E. Volandes

685 Using a longitudinal k-means clustering method to explore nursing home factors associated with SARS-CoV-2 infection peak and resilience to a COVID-19 surge
Lu Meng, Jeneita M. Bell, Kira Barbre, Sydney Guthrie, Larry Mason, Jason Massey, Ryan Wiegand, Theresa Rowe, Molly Sillions Prosper, Austin Woods, Iram Qureshi, Hannah Reses, Matthew Stuckey, David Kuhar, Megan Lindley, Alfonso Claudio Hernandez-Romieu and Andrea Benin

692 Assessment of air handling unit to improve ventilation in congregate living settings: a multicenter cross-sectional study
Christina K. Chan, Charlie Tan, Heather Candon, Matthew Crittenden, Michael McRitchie, James Callahan, Jeff Powis and Jerome A. Leis

697 Improving urine testing stewardship with a technology-leveraged urine testing guideline
Christian J. Ostrowski, Mandy C. Swann, Jacob R. Gillen and Anthony Baffoe-Bonnie

703 Repeat multiplex PCR gastrointestinal panel testing within 14 days yields minimal additional diagnostic information: a multicenter cohort study
Jeffrey Shu, Hannah Wang, Anisha Misra, Daniel D. Rhoads, Amy S. Nowacki, Jarrod E. Dalton and Abhishek Deshpande

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

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710 Recommendations made and accepted by a telehealth-enabled Antimicrobial Stewardship program implemented at rural veterans affairs medical centers
Taissa A. Bej, Amelia L. Milner, Alexandria Nguyen, Amanda Vivo, Geneva Wilson, Sara Abdelrahim, Brigid M. Wilson, Corinne Kowal, Sunah Song, Keri L. Rodriguez, Nicole Beyer, Zachary Michaels, Carla Amundson, Kristina L. Bajema, Jason P. Burnham, Christopher J. Crnich, Dimitri M. Drekonja, Lauren Epstein, Tola Ewers, Daniel J. Livorsi, Muthu Narayan, Joshua D. Nordman, Federico Perez, Christopher D. Pfeiffer, Rabeeya Sabzwari, Ahmed M. Salti, Danielle Tate, Tammy Walkner, Andrew S. Webster, Charlesnika T. Evans and Robin L.P. Jump

718 Staffing and workflow of an interactive telehealth Antimicrobial Stewardship program with the Veterans Health Administration
Amanda Vivo, Geneva M. Wilson, Dustin D. French, Taissa A. Bej, Brigid Wilson, Corinne Kowal, Amelia Milner, Carla Amundson, Kristina Bajema, Jason P. Burnham, Christopher Crnich, Lauren Epstein, Daniel J. Livorsi, Muthu Narayan, Christopher Pfeiffer, Rabeeya Sabzwari, Ahmed Salti, Danielle Tate, Tammy Walkner, Andrew Webster, Robin Jump and Charlesnika Evans

724 Antimicrobial decision-making under uncertainty in the high-stakes intensive care unit scenario: a critical interpretative synthesis
Bruno Adler Maccagnan Pinheiro Besen, Larissa Bianchini, Bruno M. Tomazini, Rachel Riera, Isabela Porto de Toledo and Verônica Colpani

732 Socioeconomic and racial review of COVID-19 antiviral prescriptions: a large health system cohort
Majd Alsoubani, Gabriela Andujar and Maureen Campion

Concise Communications

738 Performance of an artificial intelligence model for evaluation of unnecessary central lines, Northern California 2025
Jenna M. Wick, Apoorva Bhaskara, Wajeeha Tariq, Sean Lau, Mindy M. Sampson, and Jorge L. Salinas

741 Impact of admission screening on *Clostridioides difficile* infection rates in a hematology-oncology and hematopoietic cell transplant unit
Christine W. Lucky, Lahari Thotapalli, Laura K. Rusie, Yoona Rhee, Michael E. Schoeny, Nicole A. Kraut, Alexandra Seguin, Brian D. Stein, Raul I. Rodriguez, Mary K. Hayden and Michael Y. Lin

744 Adoption of water management programs and risk assessment practices in hospitals—United States, 2017–2022
Christine Yount, Matthew Stuckey, Rahsaan Overton, Jonathan R. Edwards, Margaret Dudeck, Kathryn Haass, Marissa McMeen, Shannon Novosad, Elizabeth Hannapel, Ryan Fagan and Matthew Arduino

748 An education with audit and targeted feedback intervention to de-implement preoperative surgical urine cultures: a multi-center quasi-experimental study
Vishala Parmasad, Kalpana Gupta, William J. O'Brien, Dimitri Drekonja, Gio J. Baracco Lira, Sean O'Neil, Carla Amundson, Sehrish Sikandar, Alejandra Morgan, Judith Strymish, Jeffrey Chan, Madisen E. Brown and Marin L. Schweizer

752 Measuring the efficacy of standard and novel disinfection methods on inpatient clinician-assigned phone: a 2-phase randomized experimental study
Bobby G. Warren, Emily J. Burke, Keyera M. Wynn, Aaron Barrett, Amanda M. Graves, Guerbine Fils-Aime, Deverick J. Anderson and Becky A. Smith

Letters to the Editor

755 Letter in response to "Multisociety Guidance for Infection Prevention and Control in Nursing Homes
Rosa R. Baier and Georgia K. Lagoudas

756 Response to Baier and Lagoudas' letter in response to "Multisociety guidance for infection prevention and control in nursing homes"
Lona Mody, Muhammad Salman Ashraf, Sonali D. Advani, Allison H. Bartlett, Suzanne F. Bradley, Deborah P. Burdsall, Jennifer A. Hanrahan, Susan S. Huang, Robin L.P. Jump, Mary-Claire Roghman and Rekha K. Murthy

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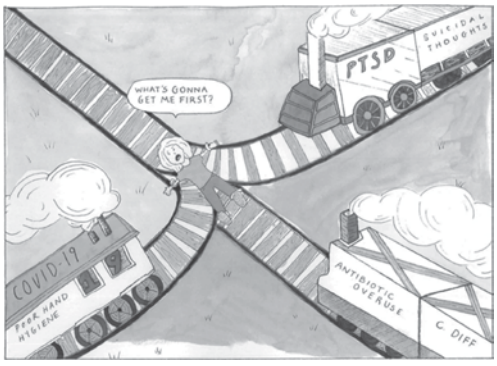
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About the cover:

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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