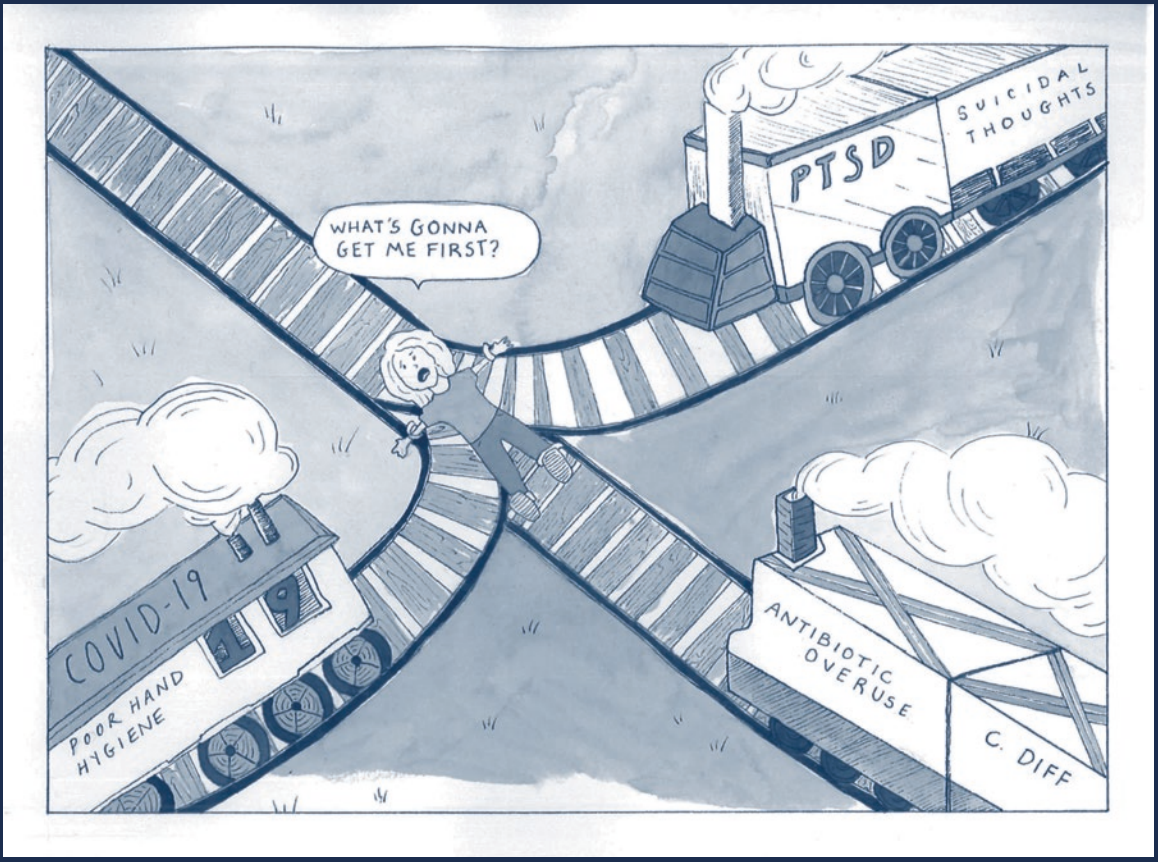
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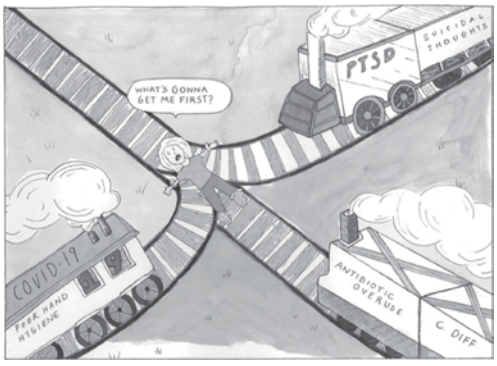
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About the cover:

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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