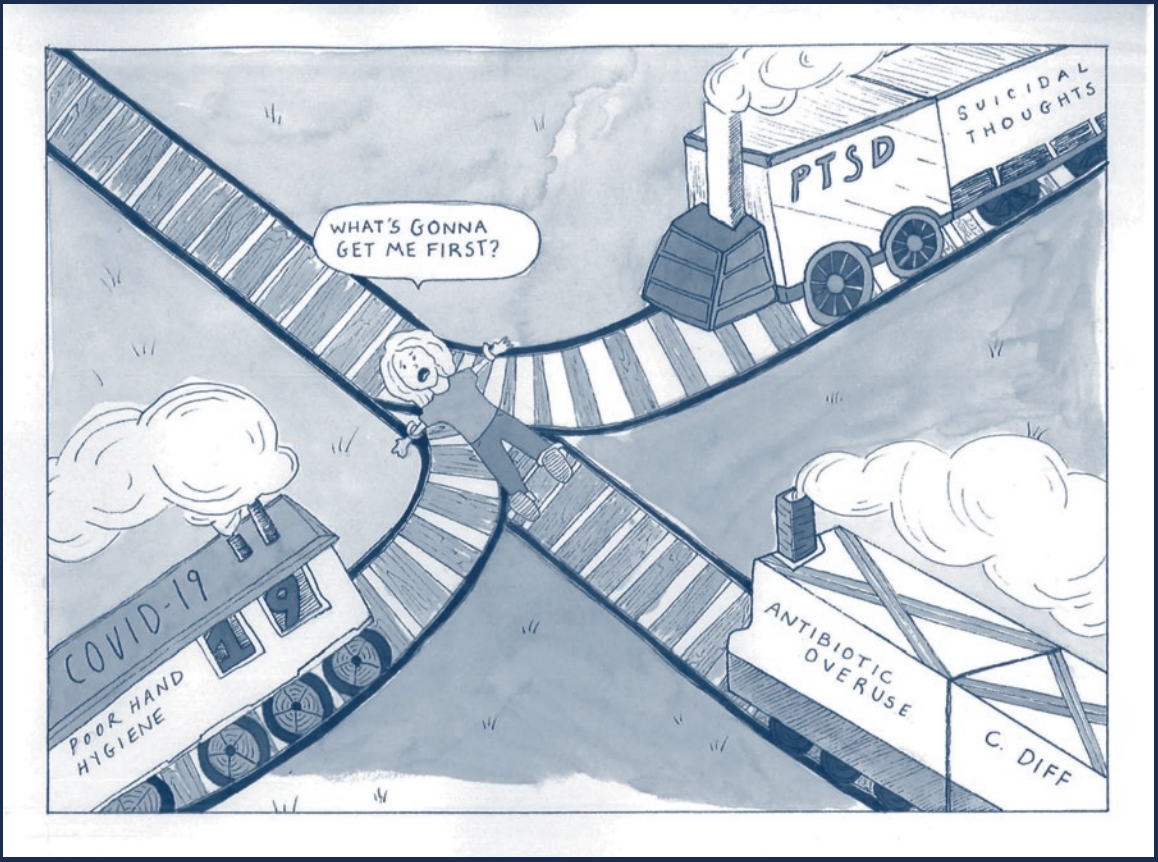
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Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology

ICHE



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Volume 47 2026 Number 1

CONTENTS

Original Articles

1 Platelet-rich plasma therapy: key infection prevention practices and strategies for safety risk reduction
Rebecca A. Stern, Jennifer Andrews, Katherine Bashaw and Thomas R. Talbot

6 Transmission of carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii* in post-acute care hospitals: an FTIR-based analysis of strain similarity
Vered Schechner, Reut Efrati-Epchtien, Adi Cohen, Elizabeth Temkin, Samira Masarwa, Moshe Bechor, Alona Keren-Paz, Yehuda Carmeli and The Israel PACH CRAB Working Group

13 Efficacy of a foamed disinfectant in reducing pathogen contamination in renovated inpatient in-room sinks: a randomized controlled trial
Bobby Glenn Warren, Amanda M. Graves, Guerbine Fils-Aime, Aaron Barrett, Isadora Mamikunian, Claudia Gunsch, Becky A. Smith and Deverick J. Anderson

20 Evaluation of hydrogen peroxide-based foam disinfection for reducing gram-negative bacterial contamination in hospital sinks
Ibrahim Ahmed El-Imam, Lyndsay M. O'Hara, Indira French, Gwen Paskiewicz, Gwen L. Robinson, Laurence S. Magder, J. Kristie Johnson and Surbhi Leekha

25 Clinical characteristics and risk factors for *Clostridioides difficile* infection in the hematopoietic cell transplantation population
Joseph O'Brien, Betty Hamilton, Matthew A Pappas and Abhishek Deshpande

36 Implementation of a diagnostic stewardship initiative for healthcare facility-onset *Clostridioides difficile* infection
Caitlin Bettger, Bernadette Thompson, John Kiley and Lisa Townsend

39 Preparedness for *Candida auris* in Canadian Nosocomial Infection Surveillance Program (CNISP) hospitals, 2024
Charlie Tan, Amrita Bharat, Erin McGill, Robyn Mitchell, Olivia Varsaneux, Kristine Cannon, Marthe K. Charles, Jeannette L. Comeau, Ian Davis, Johan Delport, Tanis C. Dingle, Philippe J. Dufresne, Chelsey Ellis, Jennifer Ellison, Amna Faheem, Charles Frenette, Linda Hoang, Susy Hota, Kevin Katz, Pamela Kibsey, Julianne Kus, Bonita Lee, Xena Li, Yves Longtin, Kathy Malejczyk, Shazia Masud, Dominik Mertz, Sonja Musto, Kishori Naik, Senthuri Paramalingam, Susan M. Poutanen, Dale Purych, Stephanie W Smith, Jocelyn A Srigley, Reena Titoria, Jen Tomlinson, Xuetao Wang, Titus Wong, Deborah Yamamura and Allison McGeer

46 Long-range air dispersal as an important source of environmental contamination in *Candida auris* clustering: possible infection control implication
Wing-Yu Fung, Ryan Yiu-Fai Cheng, Anthony Pak-Yuen Yau, Suet-Yi Lee, Nga-Han Chan, Yuk-Shan Wong, Garnet Kwan-Yue Choi, Herman Tse, Sally Cheuk-Ying Wong and David Christopher Lung

53 Genomic epidemiology of healthcare-associated respiratory virus infections in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2018–2020
Vatsala Rangachar Srinivasa, Marissa P. Griffith, Alexander J. Sundermann, Emma Mills, Nathan J. Raabe, Kady D. Waggle, Kathleen A. Shutt, Tung Phan, Anna F. Wang-Erickson, Graham M. Snyder, Daria Van Tyne, Lora Lee Pless and Lee H. Harrison

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

https://doi.org/10.1017/ice.2025.10268 Published online by Cambridge University Press

64 Validation of an electronic algorithm to identify appropriate antibiotic use for community-acquired pneumonia in hospitalized children
Kathleen Chiotos, Lauren Dutcher, Robert Grundmeier, Didien Meyahnwi, Ebbing Lautenbach, Melinda Neuhauser, Lauri Hicks, Keith Hamilton, Julia E. Szymczak, Brandi Muller, Leigh Cressman, Anne Jaskowiak-Barr and Jeffrey Gerber

71 Urine culture and urinalysis utilization practices in United States acute care hospitals between 2017 and 2020
Nyawung L. Asonganyi, Sophia V. Kazakova, Kelly M. Hatfield, James Baggs, Scott K. Fridkin, Sujan C. Reddy and Joseph Daniel Lutgring

80 Clinical factors and diagnoses associated with inappropriate urine culture ordering in primary care
Marissa Valentine-King, Barbara W. Trautner, Michael A. Hansen, Roger Zoorob, Lisa C.K. Danek, Kenneth Muldrew, Forrest Hudson, Robert L. Atmar and Larissa Grigoryan

Concise Communications

88 From abstract to article: publication rates of abstracts presented at the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America spring conference 2018 and 2021
Aayushi Rajani, Shifa Karatela, Lipi Modha, Hitanshi Bhuptani, Purav Shah, Abhijeet Shukla, Juhi Amin, Devisha Gandhi, Rohit Chitale, Ravi Durvasula and Justin Oring

91 Patient harm events: hospital-onset bacteremia vs CMS-reportable events
Heather L. Young, Carolyn Valdez, Brian Listy and Timothy C. Jenkins

94 Concise communication title: wide adoption of rapid molecular detection of antimicrobial resistance markers for use with blood cultures: implications for national surveillance of antimicrobial resistance
Hsiu Wu, Rupert England, Xueqing Huang, Joseph Lutgring, John Spinosa, Virgie Fields, Amy Webb, Marissa McMeen and Andrea Benin

98 Legionella on tap: nosocomial pneumonia cluster linked to a hospital cold water dispenser in hematology patients
Oren Biham, Hovav Azulay, Ronit Nativ, Vered Ischa Abar, Abraham Borer, Lior Nesher and Galia Karp

101 Factors associated with repeat *Clostridioides difficile* testing in VA medical centers
Geneva M. Wilson, Lishan Cao, Margaret A. Fitzpatrick, Katie J. Suda and Charlesnika T. Evans

105 Impact of a molecular syndromic panel on *Clostridioides difficile* detection and clinical interpretation
Nancy Matic, Shayan Shakeraneh, Jennifer Bilawka, Leah Gowland, Willson Jang, Colin Lee, Victor Leung, Michael Payne, Aleksandra Stefanovic, Christopher F. Lowe and Marc G. Romney

108 Environmental and human health impact of contact precaution use for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* and vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus* in Los Angeles County
Pamela S Lee, Kelsey OYong, Ami N. Shah, Cassandra Thiel, Michelle LeBrun, Loren G. Miller and Zachary Rubin

Letters to the Editor

111 Prevention of intravascular catheter-related infections—25 years later
Leonard A. Mermel and Niccolò Buetti

114 Virtual reality for infection prevention training: moving from feasibility to measurable impact
Nathkapach K. Rattanapitoon, Nav La, Chutharat Thanchonnang and Schawanya K. Rattanapitoon

https://doi.org/10.1017/ice.2025.10268 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Erratum

115 Identifying individual and organizational predictors of accidental exposure to blood (AEB) among hospital healthcare workers: A longitudinal study – ERRATUM
René Sosata Bun, Karim Aït Bouziad, Oumou Salama Daouda, Katiuska Miliani, Anastasia Eworo, Florence Espinasse, Delphine Seytre, Anne Casetta, Simone Nérome, Laura Temime, Mounia N. Hocine and Pascal Astagneau

Addendum

117 Infection surveillance and prevention strategies to detect and prevent postaccess breast tissue expander infections – ADDENDUM
Sima L. Sharara, Heather M. Saunders, Valeria Fabre, Sara E. Cosgrove, Donna P. Fellerman, Clare Rock, Polly A. Trexler, Laura B. Lewis, Meg G. Bernstein, Michele A. Manahan, Justin M. Sacks, Gedge D. Rosson and Lisa L. Maragakis

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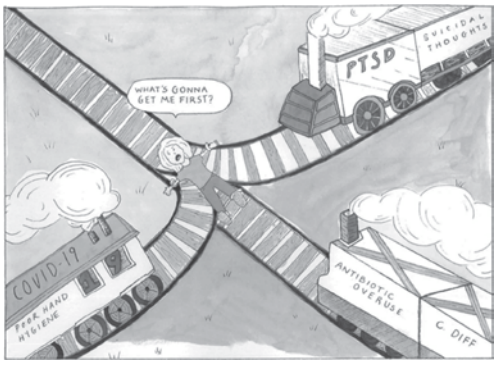
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About the cover:

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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