quaternary ammonium compound, which was readily available in this hospital and which does not damage or discolor furniture, carpets, or equipment. It remains possible that briefer application of stronger disinfectants, such as phenolics or dilute hypochlorite solutions, could be more cost-effective. Data are needed regarding the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of such alternatives.

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CDC's Epidemic Intelligence Service Portrayed in New Book

Gina Pugliese, RN, MS
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The usual portrayal of epidemic investigations by CDC's Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) Officers in novels or movies is laced with hyperbole and quite often does not pass the laugh test with those who are familiar with the EIS or have worked at the CDC. In his new novel *The Cobra Event,* Richard Preston, author of *The Hot Zone,* describes an outbreak of disease in New York City that is linked to the development and deployment of a modern biological weapon. In describing the outbreak and the subsequent involvement of the CDC, its response, and a fictional EIS Officer's investigation, Preston has written a most accurate and credible account of the CDC's operations in crisis. It is clear that he spent a good deal of time in Atlanta observing the world of the CDC and interviewing epidemiologists and scientists about epidemic investigations and mechanisms of genetic alteration of pathogens and transmission of pathogens. Building 6 at the CDC becomes as real as a photograph with its champagne-in-a-tin-cup image, as does the gleaming vision of Building 15, the maximum containment facility designed to contain highly dangerous microbial pathogens. The story is interesting and for the most part credible. For the infection control community, the book is a must read.

FROM: Preston R. *The Cobra Event.* New York City, NY: Random House; 1997.

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