

A Champion for Your Practice: Your Infection Control Practitioner

No matter how clean you think your hospital is, there's always room for improvement. To start improving, the guidelines recommend empowering a member of your team (the bigger the germaphobe, the better) to be your "infection control practitioner" (ICP). A designated infection control practitioner will help your practice prevent, investigate, observe, and report infectious diseases. You can probably picture the exact person on your team for the job: Someone who cares for your patients with laser-like focus, keeps the hospital as clean as possible, loves constantly learning, is the first to pull out the disinfectant when there's an accident in the lobby...

Watch her eyes light up when you tell her what kind of superhero she'll be and how she'll be the champion for your patients, clients, and staff.

Once she's been trained, here's what your ICP will be able to do for your practice.

1 When needed, she'll guide your team on the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) to use to place a barrier between staff and an exposure risk.

2 Your ICP will not only know what questions to ask and when in order to identify high-risk patients before they come into the practice, but she'll also be able to train the rest of her team.

Because one person can't do it all, she'll develop and refine a staff training plan and client education materials to ensure there are other dedicated caregivers on your team.

3 Her to-do list will include:

- Performing an initial assessment of the practice
- Identifying procedures used to treat and house high-risk patients
- Developing and refining an infection control manual

8 Your ICP will agree with the mantra "We respect what we inspect" so she'll be eager to develop, implement, and maintain:

- A surveillance program to assess if the ICPB plans are effective at controlling diseases
- A compliance evaluation program to ensure that staff training has been successful

7 Along with having all material safety data sheets or product safety data sheets for cleaning and disinfection materials available to your team, your ICP will also understand which disinfectants kill specific pathogens.

6 She'll remind everyone that effective hand hygiene can include the proper use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or washing hands using proper technique.

4 She'll select disinfectants based on the pathogens of concern, compatibility with materials, and level of risk. She'll also be sure the disinfective is effective by using the correct dilution and contact time (she'll never wipe it off too quickly!).

5 Your ICP will know that before disinfecting, "dry" and "wet" cleaning should occur. "Dry" cleaning (sweeping or wiping with a disposable cloth) removes loose organic material. "Wet" cleaning (scrubbing with warm water and detergent) helps to remove feces or bodily fluids. Good thing she's got lots of elbow grease!

