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## CONTENTS

## Original Articles

- 259** Respiratory viruses in the patient environment  
*Linh T. Phan, Dagmar M. Sweeney, Dayana Maita, Donna C. Moritz, Susan C. Bleasdale, Rachael M. Jones for the CDC Prevention Epicenters Program*
- 267** Are healthcare personnel at higher risk of seasonal influenza than other working adults?  
*Brenda L. Coleman, Stefan P. Kuster, Kevin Katz, Mark Loeb, Shelly A. McNeil, Matthew P. Muller, Jeff Powis, Andrew Simor, Kristy K. L. Coleman, Todd Hatchette and Allison McGeer for the Canadian Healthcare Worker Study Group*
- 273** Hand hygiene promotion delivered by change agents—Two attitudes, similar outcome  
*Yew Fong Lee, Mary-Louise McLaws, Loke Meng Ong, Suraya Amir Husin, Hock Hin Chua, See Yin Wong, Didier Pittet and Walter Zingg*
- 280** Effectiveness of foam disinfectants in reducing sink-drain gram-negative bacterial colonization  
*Lucas D. Jones, Thriveen S.C. Mana, Jennifer L. Cadnum, Annette L. Jencson, Sandra Y. Silva, Brigid M. Wilson and Curtis J. Donskey*
- 286** Household carriage and acquisition of extended-spectrum  $\beta$ -lactamase-producing Enterobacteriaceae: A systematic review  
*Romain Martischang, Maria E. Riccio, Mohamed Abbas, Andrew J. Stewardson, Jan A. J. W. Kluytmans and Stephan Harbarth*
- 295** Implementation of the Targeted Assessment for Prevention Strategy in a healthcare system to reduce *Clostridioides difficile* infection rates  
*Katelyn A. White, Minn M. Soe, Amy Osborn, Christie Walling, Lucy V. Fike, Carolyn V. Gould, David T. Kuhar, Jonathan R. Edwards and Ronda L. Cochran*
- 302** A targeted assessment for prevention strategy to decrease *Clostridioides difficile* infections in Veterans Affairs acute-care medical centers  
*Gary A. Roselle, Martin E. Evans, Loretta A. Simbartl, Brian P. McCauley, Karen R. Lipscomb and Marla Clifton*
- 306** Impact of molecular testing on reported *Clostridioides difficile* infection rates  
*Iulian Ilieş, James C. Benneyan, Tiago Barbieri Couto Jabur, Arthur W. Baker and Deverick J. Anderson*
- 313** Pathogens causing central-line-associated bloodstream infections in acute-care hospitals—United States, 2011–2017  
*Shannon A. Novosad, Lucy Fike, Margaret A. Dudeck, Katherine Allen-Bridson, Jonathan R. Edwards, Chris Edens, Ronda Sinkowitz-Cochran, Krista Powell and David Kuhar*

- 320** Clusters of nontuberculous mycobacteria linked to water sources at three Veterans Affairs medical centers  
*Gina Oda, Mark A. Winters, Susan M. Pacheco, Monica K. Sikka, Susan C. Bleasdale, Bruce Dunn, Erin Boswell, Benjamin Winters, Amelia Bumsted, Jennifer Frisch and Mark Holodniy*
- 331** Population-based assessment of patient and provider characteristics influencing pediatric outpatient antibiotic use in a high antibiotic-prescribing state  
*Sophie E. Katz, Milner Staub, Youssoufou Ouedraogo, Christopher D. Evans, Marion A. Kainer, Marie R. Griffin and Ritu Banerjee*

#### Commentary

- 337** The damage response framework and infection prevention: From concept to bedside  
*Emily J. Godbout, Theresa Madaline, Arturo Casadevall, Gonzalo Bearman and Liise-anne Pirofski*

#### Review

- 342** Length of stay, cost, and mortality of healthcare-acquired bloodstream infections in children and neonates: A systematic review and meta-analysis  
*Sofia Karagiannidou, Christos Triantafyllou, Theoklis E. Zaoutis, Vassiliki Papaevangelou, Nikolaos Maniadakis and Georgia Kourlaba*

#### Concise Communications

- 355** Evaluating North Carolina's policy for healthcare personnel living with HIV and hepatitis B who perform invasive procedures after 25 years of implementation  
*Cedar L. Mitchell, James W. Lewis, Jean-Marie Maillard, Zack S. Moore and David J. Weber*
- 358** How frequently should sink drains be disinfected?  
*Jorge A. Ramos-Castaneda, Matthew L. Faron, Joshua Hyke, Dominique Bell-Key, Blake W. Buchan, Rahul Nanchal, Paula Pintar, Mary Beth Graham, Susan Huerta and L. Silvia Munoz-Price*
- 361** Preparedness for *Candida auris* in Canadian Nosocomial Infection Surveillance Program (CNISP) hospitals, 2018  
*Felipe Garcia-Jeldes, Robyn Mitchell, Amrita Bharat and Allison McGeer for the CNISP C. auris Interest Group*
- 365** Prevalence survey on catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI) in public hospitals in Hong Kong 2018  
*Hong Chen, Joyce Wai Yan Lee, Kelvin Chung Ho Yu, Christina Ka Wai Chan, Andrew Tin Yau Wong, Raymond Wai Man Lai and Kitty Sau Chun Fung*

#### Research Brief

- 369** Sustained decrease in urine culture utilization after implementing a reflex urine culture intervention: A multicenter quasi-experimental study  
*Jessica R. Howard-Anderson, Shanza Ashraf, Elizabeth C. Overton, Lisa Reif, David J. Murphy and Jesse T. Jacob*



## Letter to the Editor

- 372** Drivers of press media response to healthcare-associated infections caused by multidrug-resistant organisms: A report from Brazil  
*Priscila Zacarias de Azevedo Carazatto, Felipe Francischeti Calil and Carlos Magno Castelo Branco Fortaleza*
- 373** Monitoring healthcare professionals after monkeypox exposure: Experience from the first case imported to Asia  
*Win Mar Kyaw, Shawn Vasoo, Hanley Jian An Ho, Monica Chan, Tsin Wen Yeo, Charmaine Malenab Manauis, Hou Ang, Partha Pratim De, Brenda Sze Peng Ang and Angela Li Ping Chow*
- 375** Methods of a study of terminal cleaning of patient rooms  
*John D. Coppin, Frank C. Villamaria, Marjory D. Williams, Laurel A. Copeland, John E. Zeber and Chetan Jinadatha*
- 376** Impact of peer comparison on carbapenem use among inpatient prescribers at a community hospital  
*Rossana M. Rosa and Amanda M. Bushman*
- 378** Detection of the emergence of *mcr-1*-mediated colistin-resistant *Escherichia coli* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae* through a hospital-based surveillance in an oncology center in eastern India  
*Samadrita Roy, Parijat Das, Surojit Das, Subhanita Roy, Soumik Pal, Vinitha Mary Joy, Sudipta Mukherjee, Arpita Bhattacharyya, Gaurav Goel, Sanjay Bhattacharya, Purva Mathur, Kamini Walia and Mammen Chandy*
- 380** Zagros Mountains: A region in Iran with extremely high incidence of *Brucellosis*  
*Milad Abdi, Rasoul Mirzaei, Vahid Lohrasbi and Khosrow Zamani*
- 382** Sustaining outpatient antimicrobial stewardship: Do we need to think further outside the box?  
*Holly M. Frost, Leisha M. Andersen, Katherine E. Fleming-Dutra, Chuck Norlin and Christopher A. Czaja*

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## About the cover:



Since 2015, the cover format of each volume of *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology* has been changed to honor one of the many professionals throughout history who recognized not only how disease might be spread but also how those principles could be applied to reduce healthcare-associated infections.

Sir John Pringle (1707–1782) was born into a prominent Scottish family. He initially studied the classics and philosophy followed by 1 year of medical study at the University of Edinburgh. He planned to leave medicine for a mercantile career. While in the Netherlands, Pringle met Boerhaave, and his interest in medicine was re-energized. He received his medical degree in 1730 from the University of Leyden. In 1734, he assumed a chair in the Faculty of Arts in “Pneumatical and Ethical Philosophy” and practiced medicine at the University of Edinburgh.

At the age of 35, Pringle was appointed surgeon to the British Forces, which had formed an alliance with the Habsburg Dynasty against France. In 1745, as Physician General of the Army, Pringle played a role in assuring the humane treatment of prisoners of war and neutrality for military hospitals hundreds of years before the Geneva Convention and the formation of the Red Cross.

In 1748, Pringle returned to London and published his experiences in military hospitals. He recognized that hospital fever and jail fever were spread from person to person and that both syndromes were due to typhus. He mandated that prisoners be washed, that their clothing burnt, and that clean clothes be provided at public expense. He understood that hospitals were a major cause of patient sickness: crowding, filth, and lack of hygiene facilitated the spread of disease. Decades before Florence Nightingale, Pringle advocated for fresh air, cleanliness, and hygiene. He observed that fomites contaminated with body fluids, like bedding, spread sepsis. He adopted microscopy and understood that the mites he saw caused scabies. Many years before Lister and Semmelweis, Pringle used acids and distilled spirits to reduce the spread of sepsis, and the first use of the term “antiseptis” was attributed to him.

During his lifetime, Pringle was recognized for his work as President of the Royal College of Physicians (RCP), Member of the Academy of Sciences, and receipt of the prestigious Copley Gold Medal. He was made a Baronet in 1766 and physician to the King in 1774. By 1780, he retired from medicine and returned to Scotland, but the cold climate did not agree with him. Pringle returned to London, but not before he gifted 10 volumes of his *Medical and Physical Observations* to the RCP (Edinburgh) with the understanding that they would never be published or lent out. He died 4 months later.

The major advances in infection control that Pringle made to the field have too often been attributed to others, and few reminders of him survive to this day. His birthplace was demolished and his grave destroyed during World War II; 2 paintings remain. A memorial to Sir John Pringle can be found in Westminster Abbey albeit in Poets’ Corner; this location is ironic, as one friend noted that an inadequate appreciation of English poetry was one of Pringle’s few failings.

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Cover image: Sir John Pringle, 1707-1782. Oil Painting. Credit: Wellcome Collection. CCBY.