

**“Building Bridges” Between Occupational Health, Public Health  
and Infection Prevention and Control**

**PICNet’s 2008 Educational Conference, May 8-9**

**Conference Report**

The Provincial Infection Control Network of BC (PICNet) was the proud host of our second annual two-day Educational Conference at the Radisson Hotel in Richmond, May 8-9, 2008. This year, we were excited to welcome over 130 delegates from across the province and beyond. This was a significant increase in attendance from last year’s conference, which brought approximately 90 delegates together. This year’s delegates represented a wide range of health care professionals from Public Health, Infection Prevention and Control, and Occupational Health, which was well in keeping with the theme, and the goal, of this year’s conference:

**Goal: To strengthen PICNet’s Community of Practice by bringing together professionals working in Occupational Health (OH), Infection Control (IC) and Public Health (PH) in order to identify common issues and share knowledge and solutions for health care-associated infection prevention and control in BC.**

In the fall of 2007, PICNet struck a Conference Planning Committee from across the province and across disciplines, who worked together to develop the theme, objectives and agenda for the conference. The three objectives of the conference were:

- To explore the opportunities for Occupational Health, Infection Control and Public Health to work collaboratively on identified infection prevention and control issues, including antibiotic resistant organisms and outbreak planning and management.
- To explore examples of successful frameworks for collaboration and communication between Occupational Health, Infection Control and Public Health for the prevention and control of healthcare-associated infections.
- To provide up-to-date education regarding health care-associated infection prevention and control, relevant to Occupational Health, Infection Control and Public Health.

Content planning for presentations and workshops were designed specifically with these objectives in mind.



Darlene Spence (left) and Tracy Lanier welcome delegates at the Registration Table.

### Day One: Outbreak Management

The first day of the conference was organized around the theme of Outbreak Management. In the morning, Bruce Gamage, PICNet Manager, gave an overview of PICNet's current and forthcoming projects, including a look at some of the guidelines currently in development, and also an overview of our new provincial surveillance initiative for tracking provincial level *Clostridium difficile* data.

Bruce's overview of PICNet's recent and upcoming activities can be found [here](#).

Following this overview, conference delegates heard from a panel that explored "The Role of the Laboratory Network in Outbreak Management," providing a behind-the-scenes look into the lab network and tips on how to better access and understand laboratory services. Drs. Ben Mack, Linda Hoang, Mel Krajden and Judy Isaac-Renton each gave their respective presentations, followed by an open-floor question and answer period. This very well-received session provided a fascinating window into the ins and outs of the private, public and community labs, including turn-around times, test menus and available services, hours and the ways in which the various labs communicate with each other. Delegates were provided with the most up-to-date version of BCCDC's 2008 Laboratory Guide to Programs and Services, as a helpful and (according to the feedback) much-appreciated take-away reference.



Dr. Mel Krajden

For those who did not pick up a copy of the Guide, it is also available on the BCCDC web site at: <http://www.bccdc.org/download.php?item=3524> The powerpoint that accompanied this panel presentation can be found [here](#).

After lunch, the group reconvened into pre-designated discussion groups, roughly dividing participants into groups representative of a mixture of Occupational Health, Public Health, and Infection Prevention and Control professionals. Dr. Bonnie Henry facilitated a Table-Top scenario exercise on managing an outbreak of Tuberculosis.

### ***Table Top Outbreak Management Exercise Part 1***

#### **Table Top - Outbreak Management Exercise**

**Objective:** This session will explore the interconnected roles of Public Health, Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) and Occupational Health in managing community, household, staff and patient exposures to an infectious TB patient.

#### **Part 1**

**Scenario:** You are the ICP in a tertiary care facility in BC. Late Saturday afternoon you receive a page at home from a nurse on the general medicine ward concerned because she has just received a laboratory report about one of their patients and is not sure what to do about it. The report is from a bronchoscopy that was performed two days ago and it reads: AFB smear positive; *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* culture pending.

The patient is a 74 year old woman who was admitted 2 days ago for investigation of a cavitary lung lesion that was thought to be lung cancer. In the previous month she had been seen 3 times in the Emergency Department (ED) with cough, hemoptysis and weight loss and on at least two of these occasions she spent over 48 hours 'admitted' to the ED. Last Thursday she was finally admitted to the ward and placed in a four bed room. Her husband has informed the nurse that the patient first sought medical attention because she was losing her breath when singing in her church choir and couldn't keep up.

The nurse tells you she has paged the surgeon on-call but that he did not think anything needed to be done over the weekend. Several of the nurses are concerned that they may have been exposed to TB and are very anxious.

1. What would be your first response to this nurse?
2. Who, if anyone, would you contact right away? Why?

Having discussed these questions, the whole group discussed the various responses and issues arising from this scenario, before reconfiguring again into the smaller designated groups in order to explore the questions in the second half of the exercise.



**PICNet Conference delegates working together.**

### ***Table Top Outbreak Management Exercise Part 2***

#### **Table Top - Outbreak Management Exercise**

##### **Part 2**

The facility outbreak management team meets the following Monday to come up with a plan. Consider the following groups of contacts and discuss who would conduct follow up and what testing and follow up would be required for each group. (Consider the roles of Public Health, IPC and Occupational Health)

1. Patients in the waiting area and ED during the 3 visits to the ED.
2. Household and close contacts of the case.
3. Staff who worked in the ED.
4. Staff who work in the bronchoscopy suite.
5. Staff who work on the ward where the patient was placed.
6. Patients who shared the ward room with the case.

Are there other groups who would need follow up? If so, who would do the follow up and what would be done?

This interactive scenario workshop illuminated some of the major challenges faced by health care providers in BC in an outbreak management scenario. Discussions especially brought forward the regional differences in terms of how outbreaks are handled, where health care workers face different levels of challenges in adequate staffing, resources, and geography. Issues of communication also arose, as outbreak management cross-cuts some of the traditional professional lines and roles of Occupational Health, Public Health and Infection Prevention and Control. Exploring and clarifying these lines and roles is critical in understanding how best we can all react to and control outbreaks in our various settings.

In particular, this session was meant to provide an opportunity for health care professionals from a range of backgrounds and regions to meet each other and discuss common challenges and potential solutions, in order to improve everyone's understandings of each others' experiences and perspectives, and to build upon and improve existing networks.

Dr. Victoria Cook closed the day with a case study of an actual TB outbreak on Vancouver Island. Dr. Cook's presentation provided a fascinating look into this recent outbreak, and how the various players involved have been working to control it.

Dr. Cook explored the social network contact tracing involved in trying to determine who was involved in this outbreak and how the TB was spreading, in order to intervene and curtail the spread. This presentation illustrated a current and very real example of the necessity of cooperation, organization, and communication across professional disciplines, institutions and facilities in dealing with an outbreak situation.



**Dr. Victoria Cook**

Click [here](#) for the PDF presentation.

### **Day Two: Communication and Collaboration**

On Friday, the agenda turned to a focus on effective communication and collaboration, providing tools and resources, as well as case studies of successful examples where communication and collaboration have come together to foster successful outcomes to health care challenges.

In the morning, delegates welcomed a presentation by Shannon Holms, Director of Internal Communications and Marketing at the BC Public Service Agency, about "The Business of Social Marketing". Shannon's message was that it doesn't always take massive resources to launch a successful campaign, but instead she pointed out that a bit of creativity in harnessing the resources one does have can go a very long way. Through a case study of a smoking cessation campaign, Shannon pointed out a variety of tactics and approaches to the creative marketing of the campaign's message. It was easy for many delegates to see the potential application of the various techniques in their own messaging. Shannon also

pointed out the importance of having a business case associated with one's campaign, in order to bring management and executive support to the work that one is undertaking.

The question and answer period for this session was particularly engaging and inspiring, and we will be posting some of Shannon's tools and techniques to our PICNet web site in the very near future.

Shannon's presentation is available [here](#).

Following Shannon's presentation, a panel called "Ideals of Collaboration" took the floor. Ian Roe, a communications specialist with the Immunizations Program at BCCDC, opened the discussion with a look at some of the public relations and media campaigns underway for immunization promotion, highlighting some success stories, and some challenges faced along the way. This was followed by a glimpse into an outbreak case study in Northern Health, presented by Infection Control Practitioner Debora Giese. Debora took the audience through a day-by-day run-down of a norovirus outbreak in Terrace, and the creative and effective approaches taken at their facility to successfully contain the outbreak. From Terrace to Ecuador, Syd Scharf, the Senior Infection Prevention and Control Practitioner at Vancouver General Hospital, took us through an overview of a collaborative project between Occupational Health and Infection Prevention and Control in Ecuador, called the "Healthy Hospitals" project. Finally, conference delegates were treated to a highly informative and entertaining presentation by Elayne "Hotlips Houlihan" Preston, who took us into the M\*A\*S\*H tent and through the myriad of challenges and strategies being employed to control the current Mumps outbreak in the Fraser Health Authority.

Presentations from this Panel are available here:

- [Ian Roe](#) "Ideals of Collaboration: Successes and Challenges in Immunization"
- [Debora Giese](#) "Enteric Outbreak at Kitimat General Hospital"
- [Sydney Scharf](#) "The Healthy Hospitals Project" in Ecuador
- [Elayne Preston](#) "Mumps 'R Us: The M\*A\*S\*H Tent Experience"

In the afternoon, professional communications and health care consultant Dr. Ron Sept led the group through an interactive communications workshop, and a presentation ([click here](#)) on how to understand and improve communications amongst health care workers. This included ways to think about the various networks that exist between health care workers and how to improve and build upon those network foundations. He closed with a discussion of how PICNet could work to foster improved communications amongst its Community of Practice.

### **Posters and Exhibition Hall**

This year, we were pleased to have over 15 posters on display highlighting various projects, studies and initiatives related to infection prevention and control, public health and occupational health from across the province. During breaks and during lunch, conference participants were able to peruse the posters as well as the Exhibition Hall set up in the hotel foyer outside the meeting room.

Representatives from a range of health care-related businesses and organizations were present to display their wares and information, including Steris, Covidien, Source Medical, 3M, Hi-Cube, Bayer, Bowers Medical Supply, the Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare in BC, the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors, Safer Healthcare Now!, the Community and Hospital Infection Control Association of Canada (BC chapter), the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health, WorkSafe BC, and Vancouver Coastal Health's Occupational Health Nurse program.

### **Evaluations and Feedback**

We received 40 evaluation forms from conference delegates, and would like to thank those who took the time to fill them out. Your comments were very valuable and will help us to improve our conference planning and organizing for next year. Overall, evaluations indicate that this conference was a valuable and enjoyable one for its delegates, with 36 of the 40 respondents indicating they agreed or strongly agreed that they would come back for next year's event, and would recommend the PICNet conference to others.

According to respondents, areas that could be improved included the meeting facilities (there was some unexpected renovation noise on the Thursday morning and some similarly unexpected lobby renovations) and having a more interactive session on the Friday afternoon. Another valuable comment was that audio needed to be improved for next year's conference, as there were times when those on the periphery of the room had difficulty hearing the speakers or questions that were asked from the floor. The most popular sessions included the panel exploring the laboratories' role in Outbreak Management, Shannon Holm's Social Marketing presentation and the Ideals of Collaboration Panel on Friday morning.

### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank a number of key people for making this conference happen, including our 2008 Conference Planning Committee: Darlene Spence, Terry Dickson, Tracy Lanier, Cathy Munford, Janice De Heer, Judy Klein, Debora Giese, Bruce Gamage, Debra Connell, Cathy Smith, Jackie Ratzlaff, Linda Adam and Sarah Pugh. We also wish to thank PICNet's Steering Committee and its Co-Chairs, Dr. Judy Isaac-Renton and Dr. Elizabeth Bryce, for their ongoing support and commitment. And finally, a sincere thank-you to all conference delegates, whose participation and involvement really made this two-day event a success.

### **Conference Sponsors**

A special thank-you to our conference sponsors, 3M, Bowers Medical Supply and Bayer, for their generous contributions towards this event.

