

**The Provincial Infection Control Network's 2009 Educational
Conference
"We're All in This Together!"**

Conference Report

**Radisson Hotel, Richmond, BC
April 2-3, 2009**



In early April 2009, the Provincial Infection Control Network of British Columbia (PICNet) hosted its third annual educational conference, "We're All in This Together!" at the Radisson Hotel in Richmond, BC. This conference built on a history of educational gatherings hosted by PICNet, starting in 2005 with the formational "Stakeholder Summits" that brought together the provincial infection prevention and control community of practice for the first time, in order to begin to shape and frame the organization that PICNet would become.

Since then, PICNet has come a long way. In 2007, with PICNet established and on its way, the "Stakeholder Summit" format of these gatherings transitioned into more traditional educational conferences, focusing on issues and developments in the world of infection prevention and control and related disciplines, rather than strictly on the work and development of PICNet as an organization. It has proven a successful format,

and this annual conference has become an important tool for information sharing and networking for professionals from across the province. This year, we welcomed approximately 130 delegates and exhibitors over the two days of the conference. In attendance, to name just a few, were delegates from WorkSafe BC, First Nations and Inuit Health, the Ministry of Health, as well as Master's of Public Health students, Infection Prevention and Control Practitioners, Occupational Health Nurses, and medical microbiologists. The wide diversity of delegates reflects the range of disciplines with which infection prevention and control issues intersect. This highlights the importance, and the necessity, of bringing everyone together to identify these points of intersection, and to learn from each other how best to work together, to complement each others' strengths, and to collectively tackle the many and diverse challenges of infection prevention and control.

The following conference report will provide a brief overview of these two days, as well as links to the speaker presentations, where we have their permission to share.

Thursday April 2, 2009

"Celebrating a Year of Achievements: A PICNet Overview – 2008-2009"

Bruce Gamage

PICNet Manager Bruce Gamage began the day's presentations with an overview of all the different projects and involvements that PICNet currently has on the go in the areas of education, best practice guidelines development, and surveillance for health care-associated infections. Bruce's presentation was a welcomed reminder that thanks to the co-operation and dedication of everyone involved in PICNet's numerous projects, real advances continue to be made in our field. Click [here](#) to have a look at Bruce's presentation and his updates on PICNet's current work and projects.

“Mumps, Bumps and Lessons Learned: Health Care Workers, Immunizations, and Outbreaks”

Dr. Elizabeth Brodtkin, Dr. Mel Krajden and Tricia Davies

This important and fascinating session brought together three different, but complementary, perspectives on the recent mumps outbreak in Fraser Health, and some of the challenges it presented to laboratories, occupational health programs, health care professionals and others worked to address the outbreak and all of its implications as it unfolded.

Dr. Elizabeth Brodtkin, a Medical Health Officer for Fraser Health, first presented some background on the outbreak, and outlined its particular social and medical dynamics. She presented the challenge of having to respond to this outbreak with the best information they had available at the time, especially in regards to the issues of health care worker vaccination and furloughing.



Dr. Elizabeth Brodtkin, Dr. Mel Krajden and Tricia Davies participating in a panel discussion of issues of health care worker immunizations and the recent mumps outbreak.

Dr. Mel Krajden presented on the laboratory perspective of the outbreak, and discussed the role of serology in testing for mumps immunity in health care workers. Occupational Health Nurse Tricia Davies followed Dr. Krajden, and provided a glimpse

into the challenges at ground zero of providing direction and rationale to health care workers for an immunization program around the mumps outbreak, some of the difficulties in building a coherent program and maintaining credibility and trust in the light of shifting information and best practice recommendations.

Dr. Brodtkin closed the session with a presentation on the recommendations from a PICNet-led Expert Working Group formed in late 2008 to develop a coherent set of recommendations around this issue for health care workers in BC. This document is currently going through its final stages of editing and review, and will be released in the summer of 2009.

To review Tricia Davies' presentation from this panel, please click [here](#). Dr. Krajden's is available [here](#).

Bevel Up: Video Presentation and Discussion

Following lunch, BC Centre for Disease Control Street Nurse Sarah Levine screened the award-winning documentary "Bevel Up," which follows a day in the life of a group of outreach nurses from the BCCDC in and around Vancouver's downtown Eastside. The documentary illustrates some of the enormous challenges, and the keys to success, when working with a diverse population, many of whom suffer from addiction and mental illness and often live either on the street or in sub-standard housing.



BCCDC Street Nurse Caroline Brunt on duty in the documentary "Bevel Up." Courtesy of <http://www.bevelup.com>

Many conference delegates were very moved by this glimpse into the lives of both the Street Nurses and their clients. Some commented that seeing the downtown Eastside from this angle helped give a perspective that would be valuable in their work. Others, watching from an infection control or occupational health perspective, had questions for Sarah after the presentation about the practices and safety of the Street Nurses and their clientele. For more information about "Bevel Up" or to purchase a copy, visit their web site at <http://www.bevelup.com/>

Infection Control and Conflict Zones: Experiences from Afghanistan:

Dr. David Forrest

Sarah Levine and the story of "Bevel Up" would not be an easy act to follow, but Dr. David Forrest was the next speaker and quickly had the audience completely mesmerized by his presentation. Through his photographs and personal tales, Dr. Forrest took us on a virtual tour of what it is like for medical professionals working in Afghanistan, surrounded by trauma, explosives injuries, and constant danger to themselves. Based on his own experiences of working as an emergency surgeon in Kandahar, Dr. Forrest illuminated some of the immense difficulties health care workers face, while providing emergency health services in the middle of a war zone. Through the thin layer of dust that constantly blanketed the operating room, Dr. Forrest showed in graphic detail the kinds of personal and professional challenges that had to be overcome on a daily basis, and some of the impressive results that were regularly achieved.

For many delegates, this presentation brought into perspective the relative luxury of the conditions almost all of us are privileged enough to live and work within, and also served as a reminder that even in the most basic of conditions, the application of infection prevention and control principles can make important differences in health outcomes.

Concurrent Sessions



Linda Kingsbury and Dianne Trudeau discuss the recent province-wide audit on sterilization and reprocessing.

After a short coffee break, the room was divided into two, and delegates chose which presentation would be most useful for them to attend. This was the first time PICNet has offered concurrent sessions at a conference, but it is unlikely to be the last!

A) What Lurks Beneath... A Workshop on Reprocessing and Sterilization

Linda Kingsbury and Dianne Trudeau

Linda Kingsbury and Dianne Trudeau spoke to the recent province-wide audit of reprocessing and sterilization processes in British Columbia, including some of the success stories -- and some the big surprises -- that they came across during the audit process. Handily, Ministry of Health representatives were in the audience to answer some specific questions that came up after the presentation.

To see Linda and Dianne's presentation, click [here](#).

B) Getting Your Ducks in a Row: An Accreditation Workshop

Ruby Fraser and Gil Vergilio

Gil Vergilio, a Quality Improvement/Patient Safety Consultant for Fraser Health, set the stage for this presentation through his overview of Accreditation Canada, and the general process of accreditation. His presentation spoke to the question of why accreditation is important, and outlined some of the things to expect when working through the accreditation process.

Following this overview, Ruby Fraser, the Regional Director of Quality and Risk Management for Northern Health, turned to a more specific look at the experiences of Northern Health during their own accreditation process. Ruby's presentation delved into some of the practical aspects of accreditation, drawing on some of the specific examples of issues faced by Northern Health.

Click [here](#) for Ruby and Gil's presentation.

Friday April 3, 2009

"First Nations Health and the Tripartite Alliance"

Dr. Evan Adams

Friday's opening presentation was given by the charismatic Dr. Evan Adams, First Nations Consultant to the Provincial Health Officer, who gave the audience a solid background on the status of aboriginal health in British Columbia and outlined some of the particular difficulties in service delivery and health models for this population. Dr. Adams spoke about the evolution of the new Tripartite Alliance for the health of aboriginal peoples in the province, and encouraged us all think about how our own work and professions intersect with aboriginal health in the province, how to improve our own cultural sensitivities, and how we can each contribute towards narrowing the gap in health outcomes between aboriginal and non-aboriginal populations. Dr. Adam's presentation is available [here](#).

"If You Build it.... Renovations/Construction in Health Care"

Gordon Burrill, Terry Dickson and Fred Roberts

The ever-affable, always entertaining Gordon Burrill joined us all the way from New Brunswick to give a presentation about the key recent updates to the CSA Standards for construction and renovation in health care settings. Terry Dickson followed with a fascinating look at the new MSA hospital in Abbotsford, BC. Terry highlighted how the principles of infection prevention and control for construction were built into the design of this hospital. Dr. Fred Roberts closed the session with a look at the topic of single room planning in hospital and care facilities. This dynamic session was one of the conference favourites.



Gordon Burrill discusses the key changes to the CSA guidelines for construction, renovation and maintenance in healthcare facilities

The Ins and Outs of CDI Reportability

Dr. John Carsley

In a country as large as Canada, we often develop different approaches to solving the same problem in various regions. It can therefore be quite beneficial to pause, sometimes, and take some time to look beyond our own regions and provincial boundaries, and find out what we can learn from others who may have taken an alternative road, or attempted different solutions. Dr. John Carsley, who was formerly the associate Medical Officer of Health for the city of Montreal, gave us just such a perspective of the route that Quebec took when dealing with a major outbreak of *Clostridium difficile* infections (CDI) in recent years, and how they have navigated the

difficult territory of CDI surveillance and reportability. For Dr. Carsley's presentation, click [here](#).

After lunch, generously sponsored by Bayer Healthcare, the afternoon sessions commenced.

"Communicable Disease in First Nations Communities"

Dr. Marcus Lem

Dr. Marcus Lem, the Director of Health Protection for First Nations and Inuit Health in BC, expanded on some of the themes touched upon by Dr. Adams in the opening session of the day. Marcus focused specifically on communicable disease in First Nations communities, and on HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis co-infections.

"Infection Prevention and Control: First Nations Perspectives"

Monique Pat

Monique Pat, an Aboriginal Liaison Nurse with Vancouver Island Health Authority, gave a very touching and heart-felt presentation about Aboriginal perspectives on health and infection prevention and control, exploring some of the cultural barriers and sometimes less than ideal history of First Nations' experiences with the health care system and other institutions. Many delegates commented afterwards about how enriching this presentation, in particular, was for them, in that it gave a glimpse into other cultural perspectives that they could integrate into their own practice. Monique's very personal and gentle style moved a lot of listeners. For Monique's presentation, click [here](#).

Hand Massage, Hand Care

Isobel McDonald

In this light-hearted closing session, Isobel McDonald (CDC Coordinator, STBBI & ARO with First Nations and Inuit Health, and also a Massage Therapist) walked us all through

the steps of a proper hand massage. With three massage therapy students making the rounds throughout the room, participants partnered with someone else and learned how to give a hand massage, and was also able to enjoy being on the receiving end of one. This session reinforced the message of looking after ourselves, so we can help look after others....

PICNet would like to offer our sincere thanks to everyone who made this event possible, and we look forward to our next conference!