



The Invisible Network

Positive Deviance is a very different - and very challenging approach. Not because it is hard to do - but because it is hard for us to see "it" happening. A part of the "it" is a growing network of people becoming more and more connected.

This week I was invited to speak at the Fall Conference for our local American Nephrology Nurses (ANNA) Chapter.

I did some extra research in preparation. I already knew that the hemodialysis population was much more heavily burdened by MRSA than even our acute care hospitals. In fact, the incidence of invasive MRSA in Baltimore City is 100 times higher among dialysis patients than the population in general.

What I did not know was how much the dialysis setting represents the very front of our front lines. I guess it makes sense - patients undergoing dialysis are chronically ill, immunocompromised by virtue of their disease, interact often with the healthcare community, have regular, substantial exposure to invasive procedures and they get those procedures with high risk patients in a crowded setting.

But - I didn't really get it until I read that 5 out of the first 6 cases of Vancomycin Intermediate S. Aureus and the first Vancomycin-Resistant S. Aureus in the United States occurred among dialysis patients. That is very sobering.

But back to my point, at the ANNA meeting we had a terrific discussion - I used the tried and true structure of our PD guiding questions to simulate the group - and soon light bulbs went off, ideas emerged and I could feel a new community starting to form.

But what struck me was how much the new community was a part of our existing community.

I didn't know about ANNA until I met Susan Leon at a kick-off presentation Irene Chakravarthy arranged at Bon Secour Hospital. After that talk, Susan asked me to be a speaker at the upcoming ANNA fall conference.

During the talk, Stuart Lessner from Union Memorial Dialysis Unit asked a question about "scrubs" - I did not know the answer - and quickly remembered to "ask" the crowd. We had a lively discussion about how to clean scrubs and whether to provide them for the staff.



As I checked back with Stuart, I noticed Lisa Grubb, a splendid Infection Preventionist from Union Memorial Hospital - sitting next him. I had not spoken to Lisa for about a year. But there she was in the crowd - sharing her experience with PD - and acting as our infection control expert! Lisa talked about how much had been accomplished by her hospital's ICU - as they started using Discovery and Action inspired discussions. She also told us about a wonderful Patient Education resource on the Internet. (attached)

After the talk - I spoke with at least 3 people that had plans to do more.

One person in particular struck me. She was from Franklin Square Hospital Center. She asked me if I knew anything about the MRSA work at her hospital. She had just been invited to join a group tackling MRSA. I asked her how that came to be. She said "well you know, we do so much more at Franklin Square - there is all this attention to isolation precautions and hand washing, so I wanted to know why we have to do all this - I went and asked - and they invited me to join this group. I am so excited. I just got this invitation and now we had the presentation today - it is all connected."

So Irene invited Susan who invited me to talk and there was Lisa with a great reference to use for patients and their families. Now the reference is part of our Friday Thoughts reaching a few hundred more people - and in the hands of 50 doctors from the Charles County Medical Society - because I took it as a handout when I went to talk to them two days later! But even more exciting, were the conversations doctors in that audience started with Jannette Bowling the Infection Preventionist from Civista - who was invited by Chris Stefanides, her CEO, to join her as she attended the Medical Society Meeting!

We are all so very connected - and as we keep connecting - each small contribution is bringing about big change. That is what PD starts!

