



LINDSAY DRACZ, RPN

Role: RPN in Niagara Health System, Douglas Memorial Hospital Emergency Department/Urgent Care Centre. Infection Control Education through RPNAO Fellowship

Nursing Experience: 6 years

Career Highlight(s): RPNAO Fellowship 2010, Infection Control Champion, Medical Missions Trip to Nicaragua, Volunteer- Medical Team for Rowing Regattas

“I enjoy being an RPN. It is not just my job – it’s my career. I love being in nursing and helping the community of Niagara. I like using my skills that I have acquired and applying critical thinking to provide the best client patient-focused care! RPNs have lots of opportunities for growth. This year, I completed an RPNAO fellowship and had the opportunity to increase awareness in the working environment and now am recognized as leader within the Niagara Health System.”

Hospital acquired infection continues to be a serious health challenge. In fact, one in nine patients leave hospital with a hospital acquired infection (OHA, 2008). As the point of entry for most patients, the Emergency Department is the ideal point to break the chain of transmission for hospital acquired infections.

Lindsay , graduated from the Fanshawe College diploma program six years ago and now works at the Greater Niagara General Hospital Emergency Department and Douglas Memorial Hospital Urgent Care Centre. Lindsay recently received a RPNAO leadership/clinical practice fellowship to focus on infection control practices in the Emergency Department. With the support of a mentoring team consisting of the Chief Nursing Officer and clinical manager of the Emergency Department and Urgent Care Centre, her fellowship was a tremendous success.

Lindsay’s goals were: 1) to raise awareness about the importance of best practices related to infection control, 2) to increase staff adherence to best practice guidelines in infection control, and 3) to complete fellowship research and create an annotated bibliography. During this process, Lindsay cultivated a close working relationship with the hospital’s infection control department. She was able to add to her knowledge base by researching the Provincial Infectious Disease Advisory Committee's best practice documents and by completing two site visits (to Northumberland Hills in Cobourg and Brantford General Hospital). During those visits, she was able to identify a number of barriers and challenges in the Emergency Departments with respect to infection control.

Lindsay’s research resulted in the development of a survey that focused on the Emergency Department staff's basic knowledge, perceptions and behaviours as they related to infection control practices. After careful examination of the survey results, educational opportunities were identified and Lindsay presented her findings. She told her story wherever she could – at staff meetings, point of care meetings at the Douglas Memorial Hospital Urgent Care Centre, a ‘Lunch and Learn’ session to disseminate information to the staff and she presented her findings at seven Grand Rounds that were held throughout the Niagara Health System.

After completing her research and education, Lindsay followed up with a post survey. The objectives of the survey were to evaluate the level of infection control best practice awareness (as well as the staff's acceptance of infection control best practices) and to determine if staffs perceptions, practices and knowledge had improved. Through continued education, raised expectations and increased awareness, infection control best practices can be improved.

Lindsay remains committed to continuing as an infection control champion and plans to seek leadership opportunities going forward. She is also a member of the Nursing Professional Practice Advisory Council, a non violent crisis trainer and a SEIU Steward. She enjoys mentoring new hires and students and in her spare time volunteers for international medical missions and rowing regattas. On a personal level, Lindsay enjoys travel (such as a recent visit to China) and sports (she recently made time to attend an NHL game in Buffalo).

As a result of this fellowship, Lindsay has been given the opportunity to speak at a RPN convention in Orillia. *"This was an experience that has made me grow as a leader and professional. I am so grateful that I was given the opportunity to partake in this fellowship," she says.*