



Cheri Fast



Lori Hintz

MOVING THE NEEDLE IN INFECTION PREVENTION

TWO SISTERS FIGHT INFECTIOUS DISEASE IN SOUTH DAKOTA

At any given moment, 2-10 million bacteria can be found from the fingertips to the elbow, according to a study in the Journal of Infectious Diseases. Cheri Fast, CIC (Certified Infection Control), Manager for South Dakota Project Firstline and her sister, Lori Hintz, RN, Quality Improvement Advisor for the Great Plains Quality Innovation Network, are collaborating to bring awareness to infection prevention across the state.

"What makes South Dakota Project Firstline unique is that it is available to anyone and can be done completely online at no cost," says Fast. "These trainings are a great foundation for infection control principles."

Project Firstline focuses on infection prevention training for frontline healthcare workers in hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living centers and the public workforce. According to Fast, infection prevention impacts "every individual in South Dakota in some way, and those in congregate living centers - such as a nursing home, are at an even higher risk."

Lori Hintz, RN, who has been working with long term care facilities since 2011, agrees. Nursing home residents are at particular risk for increased infections because they may have multiple infections at one time, have declining physical or mental capacity, and are living in an environment where they have several caregivers. This combination of factors "underscores why it's so important for caregivers to be diligent in using the proper techniques," adds Hintz.

As sisters and nurses, both Fast and Hintz see the value in collaborating with their respective organizations to bring vital education to healthcare workers and the public. The pandemic has raised awareness but the need for infection control has always existed. "It brought attention to basic principles - like washing hands often - that should have been in practice all along, both in our businesses and at home," says Fast.

KEY PREVENTION STRATEGIES:

- Wash hands often
- Get vaccinated
- Stay home when sick
- Practice food safety guidelines
- Cover your cough

Both sisters agree that good infection prevention practices will always be important, regardless of what infection is present.

SD Project Firstline is administered by the SD Foundation for Medical Care, SD Dept of Health and the Centers for Disease Control. The trainings on infection prevention can be found at www.sdprojectfirstline.org

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