



NEBH Helps Strike Out Infection



Red Sox Manager Terry Francona with Maureen Spencer, MEd, RN, Infection Control Manager.

On January 24, the Baptist “stepped up to the plate” in the fight against Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) invited the Hospital’s Infection Control Manager, Maureen Spencer, to speak at a ground-breaking “Strike Out Infection” program at Fenway Park.

Boston Red Sox Manager Terry Francona was the keynote speaker at the event designed to heighten awareness of the prevalence of MRSA—a virulent strain of antibiotic-resistant staph infection—among professional and student athletes. Today, as many as 10% of athletes are colonized with MRSA; of those colonized, 30 – 60% will develop the infection.

Francona Shares a Personal Story

Francona kicked off the program by speaking about his own experience: In 2002, he developed an MRSA infection following arthroscopic surgery and nearly lost his life. Francona required eight surgeries

to recover from the infection. As a result of the disease, he will be on blood-thinning medication for the rest of his life.

Francona blames himself for not asking enough questions. To make matters worse, his doctors were slow to diagnose his infection as MRSA. He noted that athletes tend to think of themselves as indestructible—and advised the audience to help them to recognize the symptoms of MRSA and encouraged them to ask questions if something’s not right.

For Spencer, Francona’s speech was the highlight of the event. “For me, it was unnerving to have somebody get up and tell this story in public,” said Spencer, who is no stranger to such stories—but in a much more private setting. “Here you’ve got a public personality up there telling this story about how he almost died from MRSA. That just threw me for a loop.”

Following Francona’s speech, Spencer joined a panel that included State Representative Peter J. Koutoujian, House Chairman of the Joint Committee on Public Health, Department of Public Health Commissioner John Auerbach, Covidien’s Director of Research and Development for Advanced Wound Care David Fink, and Dr. Alan Block from the Ohio State University Medical Center.

Spencer discussed MRSA risk factors, as well as the Baptist’s cutting-edge nasal screen process. “What some hospitals are doing is just taking the culture and putting them on precautions. They’re not trying to eradicate it,” said Spencer. “Our program is different in that we’re trying to identify it ahead of

time and destroy it before [patients] come in.”

The Baptist Receives Important Recognition

Sponsored by APIC, Covidien, and Rite Aid, “Strike Out Infection” drew an audience of 150 high school coaches, school nurses, the media, and infection control practitioners.

Spencer was pleased that APIC singled out the Baptist to tell its story. “It was because APIC knew the excellent work we’re doing here as a team, working toward a zero infection rate.”

Since the event, Spencer has received e-mails and phone calls from those who heard her speak—and has openly shared the details and logistics of the Baptist’s nasal screening process. “There’s just not enough time when it comes to infection,” she said. “We share everything.” ■

Hospital Holiday Party

On Saturday, January 26, nearly 550 NEBH employees and their guests gathered in the elegant State



Peter Lam, HIS and his wife, Amy

Room for an evening of dinner and dancing. In tribute to the fabulous view from the 33rd floor of 60 State Street, the theme of this year’s holiday party was “A Night Among the Stars.”

Once again, photographers took plenty of photos “paparazzi” style as guests entered the party.

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