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Editorial

APIC vision

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As the world continues to address the COVID-19 pandemic, we are presented with the opportunity to take stock of our experience and reflect on the journey ahead. The year 2022 marks an especially auspicious time for APIC as we celebrate the 50th anniversary since our founding.

APIC's origins hail back to December 21, 1972, when a group of pioneering infection control nurses recognized the need for an organized approach to preventing healthcare associated infections (HAI). Throughout the years, APIC has stood at the forefront of guiding the practice of infection prevention and control and today stands at over 15,000 members in 48 countries.

As we enter our golden anniversary we look back with appreciation at the visionary leaders from 1972 while simultaneously recognizing that APIC now stands at a substantially new moment in time, with the opportunity to create a hopeful and bright path forward to guide our next 50 years.

In that vein, in early 2021 the APIC Board of Directors began re-evaluation of APIC's mission, vision and strategic plan. These new directions were adopted by the APIC Board of Directors in the fall of 2021 and are presented here today to unveil the roadmap that will be utilized to move forward into the future of the association.

If the pandemic taught us one thing, it was that adaptation and nimbleness are keys to success. We're seeing infection preventionists (IPs) continue to work tirelessly throughout the pandemic and consistently demonstrate the ability to quickly adjust as we address the spread and evolution of the virus. The reality of infection prevention is that the ability to learn, adapt and take action define us.

The new mission and vision statements reflect 2 substantial changes (see [Box 1](#)). The first reflects the need for IPs to evolve in their scope of practice to not only address healthcare associated infections, but to lead the way on the prevention of all infections, regardless of setting, location or industry. The second change, specifically related to our mission statement, builds off our legacy of supporting the practice of infection control and calls for us to drive the science that supports our practice, especially as it pertains to implementation science and human factors that underpin our profession. This reflects the reality that IPs must lead in generating our own research to drive innovation, effectiveness and adaptability of IP strategies.

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Box 1 Vision statement: A safer world through the prevention of infection

Mission statement: To advance the science and practice of infection prevention and control

Supporting our new vision and mission statements, APIC has adopted three key strategic priorities that will guide our collective work as we bring our bold vision and mission to life (see [Box 2](#)).

Box 2 Champion the scientific advancement and practice of infection prevention and control

Elevate Infection Preventionists as essential advocates, leaders, and experts

Foster development of the next generation infection prevention and control workforce

COVID-19 has demonstrated that the practice of infection prevention is needed more than ever and as we gaze into the crystal ball, we believe that new technologies and innovations will provide opportunities to accelerate the effectiveness of our work and improve the outcomes of our efforts.

The pace of technological change is dizzying, especially as we look back from 1972 to today. We can only begin to imagine what the next 50 year will hold, but believe that some current emerging trends and themes will significantly impact our profession:

GENOMICS

As our understanding of the human genome advances, so too does the application to the practice of infection prevention. It is not unreasonable to expect that the use of genetic data will be used to help better target infection control measures, confirm or exclude outbreaks, and to provide information on transmission trends. Whole genome sequencing is certainly technology that is present today, but the pace of its use in our profession is likely to accelerate in the immediate future. The rapid development of new vaccine and testing strategies, such as the use of mRNA and CRISPR technology for COVID-19 bring amazing hope for combating infectious diseases. Development of molecular-level interventions to cure illness is here. Nonetheless, as long as there are living beings there will be transmission of pathogens and thus a need for infection prevention expertise.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence holds tremendous potential to advance the field of infection prevention in the future. Through the rapid collection and interpretation of data via machine learning, IPs can expect to have new tools that will enable us to quickly identify and prevent outbreaks through rapid pattern identification and association with potential risk factors. Population-level modeling may be utilized to anticipate disease transmission, thereby helping us to target interventions. Additionally, these tools will increasingly be used to monitor compliance with infection prevention and control measures and will find their way into a wide array of settings, within and outside of healthcare. Through robotic enabled solutions, to remote monitoring tools, artificial intelligence will most certainly form the cornerstone of many advances to come.

EMERGENCE OF IPS IN NON-HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

As clearly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, the application of infection prevention interventions well beyond healthcare settings

are sorely needed. COVID-19 illustrated the importance of implementing sound infection prevention and control measures, from hotel rooms to cruise ships, to movie theatres, airlines, schools, factories—the list goes on. As lessons learned from this pandemic emerge, IPs will play a role in shaping adoption of risk reduction strategies to optimize protection for the general population from emerging pathogens.

We can most certainly expect that the next 50 years will surprise us in many ways, and as with all prognostications, time will ultimately tell. However, one very clear prediction we can make is that APIC will continue to endure and serve as the collective voice for infection prevention and control. The first 50 years of APIC's journey has been incredibly impactful. HAIs were once an expected outcome, prevention was not standardized and transparency of infection data did not exist. Today, we aim for zero, implement evidence-based risk reduction strategies and find HAI data in demand both internally and externally. Utilizing the new strategic plan, APIC will help prepare and support the IPs of today and tomorrow for the amazing future that lies ahead. Stay tuned in future editorials for more details on implementation of the new strategic plan.

Onward and upward!