

An Example of a Small Step for a Big Country, but a Huge Step for a Small Country

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Serbian Association of Prevention and Infection Control (SAPIC) was established in May 2007, as a voluntary, unprofitable, professional, scientific and independent unit for the territory of Serbia. The objectives of the Association are the following: to improve the health of a population through prevention and reduction of the risk of healthcare associated infections (HCAI); to make an interdisciplinary approach recognized in the prevention and control of HCAI; to enable domestic and foreign exchange of experience related to prevention and infection control; to organize research and scientific meetings, congresses, workshops; and to educate the new professionals interested in infection control.

In order to achieve these goals, the SAPIC rallies about 360 members from various professions: doctors, nurses, sanitary technicians etc.

Ever since it was first established, SAPIC became a member of the International Federation of Infection Control (IFIC) and a member of the European network to promote infection prevention (EUNETIPS) since its foundation. Current and Past President of the SAPIC members of their Boards.

By 2013 when the first Bylaw was published in Serbia, the infection control (IC) was organized in the specific way, on account of and according to the limited resources in the country. The National Infection Control Committee was established in 2003 which co-ordinated and implemented the national IC policy in cooperation with an IC sector of the National Institute of Public Health. Infection Control Committee in the hospitals, with at least one epidemiologist, from the regional institutes of public health as a member, was introduced in 1997. Owing to the reduced funds that the given country had at its disposal, the existing structure had to be utilized. Surveillance of HCAI in hospitals was implemented by the sanitary technicians along with the qualified epidemiologist for IC from the regional public health institutes. However, three national prevalence studies of HCAI were conducted in almost all acute care hospitals in the country. In the last one, which was carried out in 2010, nearly 200 nurses, who were participating in the study along with the physicians, were educated.

The new law provides for the existence of the IC team in each hospital, which consists of at least one IC doctor and a nurse for HCAI on every 250 beds.

This change in the organization of infection control represents one big step forward in the effective prevention and control of HCAI in Serbia.

Therefore, a need for staff training in the area of infection control was recognized. The SAPIC has organized four infection control courses that are accredited by the Health Council of the country. In addition to that, it has organized several courses with foreign teachers, as an "ESCMID Postgraduate Education Course: Improving Antibiotic Prescribing in Hospitals" in 2011; "How to fight with ESBLs Gram negatives" in 2014.

Furthermore, SAPIC collaborated in the organization of The 6th EurAsia Congress of Infectious Diseases Epidemiology , Immunology and Clinical Microbiology which was held in September 2014 in Belgrade.

We hope that the SAPIC will continue to promote patient safety and the best practice in infection control and prevention.