Keeping Pathogens Out of the Workplace

During the 2013-2014 flu season, more than 300 people have died in the state of California alone. In 2012, more than 48,000 cases of pertussis (otherwise known as whooping cough) were reported, with thousands of cases likely going unreported. And while the disease is less common in the United States, nearly one-third of the world’s population is infected with latent tuberculosis. Nearly 10,000 cases of it were reported in the United States during 2012.

Airborne infections such as influenza, pertussis, and tuberculosis spread so quickly and pervasively that many times, employers find themselves with an outbreak and struggling to figure out where or when it began. Creating an infection control program, ensuring your employees are adequately reporting their illnesses, and equipping your employees with respirators are all steps to take to ensure an outbreak does not affect your company. Here are some tips and tools for knowing what to look out for, how to create a plan, and what to do if an outbreak does occur.

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HHS report faults care at nursing homes

A new report by the Department of Health and Human Services’ inspector general found that an estimated one-third of residents suffered harm because of substandard care and that the chances of nursing home inspectors discovering these “adverse events” are “slim to none,” said Ruth Ann Dorrill, a deputy regional director for the inspector general and the manager of the investigation.

Nearly 60 percent of these incidents were preventable - including injuries from falls or medication errors - and more than half of residents were hospitalized as a result, the report said. In 6 percent of the cases, poor care contributed to residents’ deaths.

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CDC says hospitals can be hazardous to your health when infections aren’t controlled

Catching a life-threatening illness while lying in crispy-clean linens is one of the last things most people expect from a hospital stay. But in 25 patients have at least one hospital-associated infection, according to a survey of 183 hospitals released Wednesday by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New England Journal of Medicine.

Researchers looked at 648,000 patients from 2011 in their survey. Of the more 720,000 cases they found of hospital- borne infections, 75,000 resulted in death. In a conference call with reporters, federal health officials warned that catching an infection is as easy as doctors forgetting to wash their hands.

“Although there has been some progress, today and every day, more than 200 Americans with health care-associated infections will die during their hospital stay,” said CDC Director Tom Frieden in a statement.

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