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Joint Statement of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) and the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA)

Mission critical partnership for infection prevention success

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Since 2015, the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) and the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) have worked together on multiple projects and programs to advance the fields of infection prevention and hospital epidemiology in areas where our missions and visions overlap. These collaborative efforts have evolved from a working arrangement into a true partnership, with shared visions of how this close relationship between the 2 organizations can mirror high-functioning, successful infection prevention programs.

Each year, APIC and SHEA convene 2 formal meetings of a joint organizational task force composed of a subsegment of both boards, 1 meeting in person and 1 by conference call. These meetings help keep the changing society leaders informed about the partnership and on track to meet goals. In addition, to keep the membership informed, we continue to host an annual SHEA/APIC Presidents' Webinar to highlight the shared resources and ideas of our collaborative efforts and to provide an opportunity for members to ask questions and contribute ideas for future collaborations.

In 2019, SHEA and APIC again hosted a joint education session, held first at the SHEA Spring Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts, in April, and then at the APIC Annual Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in June. This year's session was titled "SSI Prevention Strategies: IP in the OR." The sessions attracted packed crowds at both conferences and featured the presidents of both organizations, Hilary Babcock, MD, MPH, FIDSA, FSHEA and Karen Hoffmann, RN, MS, CIC, FSHEA, FAPIC. These sessions were great opportunities not only to showcase our leadership to each other's members but also to provide the presidents with an opportunity become further acquainted, which has further strengthened the partnership.

This organizational partnership facilitates volunteer-level collaboration, linking the key committees of the 2 associations. Since 2018, APIC has been represented on SHEA's public policy committee and SHEA has been represented on APIC's practice guidance committee.

In December 2018, we enthusiastically launched the Joint APIC–SHEA Leadership Development Program, hosted in Arlington, Virginia. This innovative program brought together an elite group of infection preventionists and health care epidemiologists to participate in joint leadership training. The conference focused on building and maintaining effective leadership of infection prevention and antibiotic stewardship practices and partnerships across their facilities. We look forward to hosting the second Leadership Development Program conference in December 2019, building on the success of the inaugural conference.

Each year, we monitor our partnership goals and assess our progress and opportunities to learn how we can strategically support each other. To that end, each organization's president, along with the chief staff officer, presents at an in-person board meeting of the other organization each year. These presentations provide the opportunity to talk about the respective organizations as a whole and to stress the leadership and partnership efforts on a broad scale so this partnership will continue to flourish and to thrive.

In 2019, both boards approved a new joint award to recognize key partners of our 2 organizations who have made significant lifetime contributions to the fields of infection prevention and control and epidemiology. The award criteria and nomination process are being developed now, with a launch date of 2020. This award will reach a critical niche of people who have been active contributors through both organizations and have transcended their roles to set the field on a higher level.

Additionally, one of our partnership goals for the past few years has been to meet with patient advocacy and consumer groups to develop positive, trusting relationships and to work in partnership around mutual infection prevention goals. Although both SHEA and APIC continue to develop independent strategies to work with individual patient safety organizations, we have united in promoting vaccine safety and effectiveness. Both organizations are working on strong, independent statements, with mutual endorsement, to provide additional support for this effort. We are also working on joint materials to be used by health care workers, patients, and patient groups to promote this messaging.

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These collaborative efforts of SHEA and APIC are crucial to the missions of each organization: to keep patients safe from infections and to champion effective and efficient care that preserves antibiotics for future generations. The partnership allows us each to amplify our core message that science-based practices for epidemiology and infection prevention should be applied to policy and practice for the best patient outcomes. In a world crowded with information, being able to jointly take a stand and send a message is critical to current practitioners and to the future growth of the field.

Together, our organizations seek to have an impact across the continuum of care on infection prevention in diverse populations in all settings by promoting appropriate policies and practices and by encouraging allocation of adequate resources to infection prevention and antimicrobial stewardship. This ongoing partnership serves to prioritize the importance of avoiding health care–associated infections for safe and positive health outcomes. We look forward to working together in the years to come for continued improvements in care and patient protection.