

Summer food venues keep environmental health officers busy



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July 7, 2011

Submitted by [James Nesbitt](#), Communications & Public Affairs

Isher Deol's first job was as a "tobacco decoy"—an underage youth employed by officials to try to buy cigarettes from shopkeepers that don't check for ID.

Now a VCH environmental health officer, Isher recalls: "They used to pick me up from school. I got paid for trying to buy smokes—what's better than that?"

No longer working undercover, Isher is on the frontline of environmental health. She is assigned to District 25, a chunk of downtown Vancouver with the event-heavy Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre at its centre and a surrounding area tightly packed with restaurants, cafes, hair and nail salons, hotels with swimming pools and street-side vendors.

While Isher's tobacco job was exciting, it also offered a lesson she still uses: "It taught me the importance of examining a situation."

A recent outing with Isher as she inspected food vendors at Canada Place and a nearby street captured this point. Isher quickly immerses herself in a vendor's operations, asking questions while carrying out tasks like measuring temperatures of cooled and cooked foods, making sure water and bleach-based sanitizers are handy and checking to see that onsite thermometers are functioning.

Isher is professional and polite, at one point tactfully explaining to a new street vendor that his business has "room for development" before it will fully comply with regulations. With another vendor, she patiently explains that sandwiches prepared ahead of time will have to be thrown out because the cooler they are stored in is too warm.

What is one of the most common infractions Isher comes across? Hand washing, particularly for vendors who set up at special events or on the street. "Some vendors think a bucket of water is sufficient for hand washing," she remarks. But poor hand hygiene "is the main cause of the spread of communicable diseases. It's a matter of speaking to them about the issue, providing hand washing signs and working with them so they understand its importance."

Isher offers some picnic season food tips:

- Temperature control is key. Cold things need to stay cold and hot things need to stay hot.
- Cold foods should be packed in ice or cold packs, even when ready to serve, if the weather is hot enough.
- Keep serving portions of foods small, and replace them regularly, rather than setting out a huge amount that may sit and warm up or cool down beyond a safe temperature.
- Use a probe thermometer to check that burgers and chicken are cooked to 74° C.

When asked, Isher quickly provides a list of things she likes about her job: "Dealing with people, providing a necessary customer service and seeing the difference you've made at the end of the day."

She caps it off with a sentence that could be an environmental health motto: "Your eyes and ears have to be at full alert."

The Environmental Health program is part of a larger Health Protection Department which also includes Tobacco Control and Community Care Facility Licensing. There are 75 Environmental Health Officers delivering Environmental Health - Health Protection Services across VCH. Offices are located in Whistler, Squamish, Powell River, Sechelt, North Shore, Vancouver and Richmond. Services are also provided in communities on the north coast including Bella Bella and Bella Coola.

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Latest news at VCH

Blackberry app helps hand hygiene

July 21, 2011

Submitted by *James Nesbitt, communications specialist, Communications & Public Affairs*

Blackberry app helps hand hygiene

VCH creation streamlines, standardizes compliance audits

Think "blackberry" and "homemade" and you're likely to think "jam." But in VCH's case, put those two things together, and you'll come up with "app."

VCH hand hygiene auditors now use Blackberries to track compliance on an app created by systems analyst/designer Chandi Panditha. Chandi works with both Client Relations and Risk Management and Quality and Patient Safety to create ways to "optimize and automate patient safety procedures."

A few months ago, Chandi was asked to "come up with a solution to automate the hand hygiene audit process." He says a Blackberry app seemed like a good solution, because VCH uses Blackberries and they provide a "secure and stable platform."

Chandi set to work - "My Java programming background came in very handy for this request" - and developed a way to replace clipboards with smart phones. The result, according to Quality and Patient Safety executive director Linda Dempster, is a system "where audits, once they are completed, are instantly uploaded via e-mail to an Excel spreadsheet on a centralized server, and reports can be automatically generated. The app provides a whole new level of accuracy and reliability by eliminating manual recording."

Frontline hand hygiene auditor Janet Lakusta sums up what she likes about the app in one word: "Efficiency." Janet continues, "I like that I don't have to carry paper around anymore - it's green." Janet also likes the security and standardization the app provides, for instance, drop-down menus with pre-loaded comments.

Hand hygiene coordinator Sheila Browning, who performs both audits and assembles compliance rating reports, likes the fact "audits can be performed any time, for instance, if you are on the unit for another purpose you can easily record a few observations at the same time." And when asked how the app makes compiling reports easier, Sheila answers, "It's huge - no more data entry, and it is much easier to do comparisons between hand hygiene compliance sites."

Chandi recently presented the hand hygiene app to representatives from other health authorities and the Ministry of Health, and received a very positive response.

What is Chandi's favourite Blackberry app? "I don't have a favourite app, but my two sons like to borrow my Blackberry to play video games."

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VCH Connect

Residential care site excels at hand hygiene



Kiwanis Care Centre team. Residential care coordinator Shahla Banki seated on the far left.

August 25, 2011

Submitted by *Linda Dempster*, executive director, Quality & Patient Safety

It's fitting that the North Shore, which stands out geographically in the Lower Mainland, is also home to a residential care facility that stands out for its commitment to hand hygiene.

Kiwanis Care Centre in North Vancouver uses a team approach to make hand hygiene a regular part of daily life. Shahla Banki, the residential care coordinator, is instrumental in this achievement.

Shahla has been the centre's residential care coordinator for the past four years. An RN with a background in geriatric and psychiatric nursing, Shahla drew on her experience and a belief in success through teamwork to establish the residence's hand hygiene program. "We started doing audits in November 2009," Shahla explains, "because good hand hygiene means less infection. Every month, we conduct audits on every unit – including our reception desk – and we have really good results."

To ensure the audits were based on a strong framework, Shahla started with two key elements. "I made sure Microsan dispensers were located everywhere. And then we started doing educational in-services for staff and residents, because people need to know why they are being asked to do something."

There is no resting on laurels at this care facility. Two recent developments illustrate its ongoing hand hygiene commitment. First, residents volunteering as hand hygiene ambassadors greet visitors, offer them a squirt of hand sanitizer, and explain what hand hygiene is all about. Second,

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Shahla set up a three-part review of pharmacy antibiotic orders, unit hand hygiene compliance results, and patient records to keep an eye on infection rates.

Everyone at Kiwanis, Shahla says, is involved in hand hygiene, "from activity employees to physiotherapists to care aides." Sheila Browning, VCH's hand hygiene coordinator, confirms this, recalling, "Staff always have questions for me, for instance, the music therapist asked me how often they should wipe down instruments. They're always thinking about hand hygiene – they are truly engaged."

And just how good are their results? For May and June of this year, hand hygiene compliance was 95 per cent; for July it was 94 per cent. In 2010, the average monthly compliance rate was a remarkable 90 per cent.

But compliance at Kiwanis Care Centre is about more than chasing numbers; it's about achieving best-practice infection control everyday, and the spirit of this is captured in a simple but caring note Shahla includes in her monthly hand hygiene compliance reports: "Your hand washing compliance is effective to reduce infection in our family and the facility."

Hand hygiene advice for care facilities

- Start with the basics; make sure hand sanitizer is available throughout your facility.
- Conduct educational in-services on hand hygiene's role in preventing the spread of infection.
- In addition to staff, provide hand hygiene information to residents and visitors so everyone knows what is expected of them.

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Nesbitt, James [CORP]

From: Dempster, Linda [VA]
Sent: August 23, 2011 9:02 AM
To: Nesbitt, James [CORP]
Subject: RE: VCH News Spotlight: Kiwanis hand hygiene

Thanks!!

It is great.

Linda

From: Nesbitt, James [CORP]
Sent: Tuesday, August 23, 2011 8:00 AM
To: Dempster, Linda [VA]
Subject: FW: VCH News Spotlight: Kiwanis hand hygiene

Hi Linda – any feed back on this?

J

From: Nesbitt, James [CORP]
Sent: August 19, 2011 9:17 AM
To: Dempster, Linda [VA]; Browning, Sheila [VA]; Banki, Shahla [NS]; Payne, Kelle [NS]
Subject: VCH News Spotlight: Kiwanis hand hygiene

Hi all – please review the attached – if you can get back to me by Monday afternoon with any feedback, I'd appreciate it.

The plan is to run it as next week's VCH News Spotlight, with one of the group photos taken at Kiwanis Care Centre.

Thanks and enjoy the weekend - J

James Nesbitt, ABC
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