

# The Inside Story

## A Walk in My Shoes

Tina Bobo

### Tina Bobo brings nursing expertise to a new career in infection control

On any given day, you might find Tina Bobo behind the scenes in the cafeteria, looking into vents on the roof of the Hospitals, or investigating a potential infection control problem. As one of four infection control practitioners, Bobo works throughout the hospitals helping keep patients, visitors, and staff safe from infections.

Every staff member, patient, visitor, construction worker; every carton of eggs, box of supplies; every bite of food prepared; every bag of garbage; and breath of air taken in the Medical Center falls under the purview of Bobo and the staff of the Infection Control

Program. Because of the scope of the job, infection control practitioners like Bobo must have not only knowledge of how infections are transmitted but also a thorough understanding of how the Hospitals function. Among her responsibilities are writing and implementing policies designed to prevent and control infections and providing infection control related education for staff. "We protect the patients by making sure the staff know what to do to prevent the spread of infection," she says.

"Although we are sometimes viewed as inspectors, infection control is much more than that," Bobo says. In order to protect the health of all patients, visitors, and staff, Bobo may have to investigate problems that have caused or may lead to an infection control "emergency". (An infection control practitioner is available to answer questions 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays.) The practitioners work with the staff involved, which may include patient care staff, maintenance workers, or other support personnel to resolve issues. "Everyone has to work together to minimize infection risks," says Bobo. One of Bobo's goals is making everyone realize that he or she plays an important role in protecting patients, visitors, and themselves.

Bobo's experience is in trauma/critical care nursing. The other practitioners' backgrounds are in microbiol-

ogy, public health, and hematology/oncology nursing. "Our diversified backgrounds are an asset to the program," Bobo explains.

A variety of life experiences led her to her career. Her aunt was a nurse, and her grandmother received a Bachelor of Nursing degree at the age of 60. When Bobo was an undergraduate, a family friend suffered a 70 percent burn at work. "It was life threatening," Bobo says. "When I came home from school during the summer, I helped his wife care for him when he came home from rehab."

Bobo moved to Chicago and began her career at the Hospitals in September 1994 as the clinical nurse specialist in the burn unit. For Bobo the move to Chicago was a big one, coming from the small town of Liberty,

North Carolina, where her family still lives. In 1996, Bobo married and had a baby.

In 1998, Bobo recognized a need for an infection control class on resistant organisms for the critical care units' staff. She worked with Sylvia Garcia-Houchins, infection control practitioner, to set up the classes and learned that there was a practitioner position available. Garcia-Houchins says, "Tina has been a tremendous asset to our program. Her knowledge of clinical issues, as well as her warmth and intelligence, have made her a delight to work with."

In their spare time, Bobo, her husband and their two-and-a-half year old daughter, Sidney, enjoy traveling and visiting with family.



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