Background:
Clostridium difficile (C. diff) infections can cause life-threatening complications and treating these infections costs $1.3 billion health care dollars every year. Sodium hypochlorite bleach is the only solution approved by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to be effective against the spores formed by clostridium difficile. In addition to isolation precautions, bleach cleaning of high touch surfaces in endemic areas is recommended by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The inpatient oncology unit has patients who are highly susceptible to infection, making this population ideal for additional interventions to decrease the spread of this infection. Despite adherence to the isolation procedure, there is currently opportunity for improvement.

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to reduce the number of hospital acquired cases of Clostridium difficile on the inpatient oncology unit by 10% in three months following the initiation of the project.

Setting: An inpatient, 24 bed medical oncology unit within a large quaternary care, urban, Midwest hospital.

Sample: All patients admitted to the inpatient oncology unit.

Methods: Nursing staff was re-educated at a staff meeting on the importance of hand washing with soap and water. The education was done by a staff nurse, who also provided the unit with a poster for continued reinforcement of the education. A visual cue was placed on gel dispensers in the rooms where patients were isolated for C. diff to remind caregivers to wash hands before using alcohol-based sanitizer. The major intervention was that, in addition to the daily room cleaning by Environmental Services, nursing assistants are bleach cleaning three high touch areas (room door handle, dirty linen cabinet door handle, and the bathroom door handle) at the beginning of each shift. This quality improvement project was led by a staff nurse, in collaboration with the Clinical Nurse Specialist and Infection Prevention. [The interventions went into effect on November 15, 2013.]

Results: There is no outcome data to date, but the measurement for the effectiveness of the intervention is number of hospital acquired Clostridium difficile cases quarterly. The National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) recommends the hospital-wide goal to be a 30% reduction in infections. There is no national benchmark.

Conclusions: There are no conclusions as the intervention period has not elapsed. Conclusions will be drawn once the outcome data is complete.