

Member of the Month

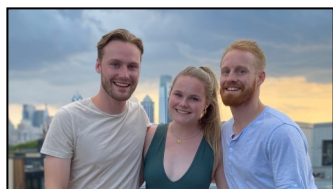
Eileen Sherman

Interviewed and written by Hillary Hei



Role: System Director, Infection Prevention, Main Line Health (MLH)

Years of IP service: 30! Eileen learned about IPC when obtaining her Master in Clinical Microbiology at Thomas Jefferson University. By day she was a full-time student, by night she worked evening shifts in the clinical laboratory. Through a clerkship, she spent 6 months in the IPC department reading patient paper charts and absorbing information from the team. After graduation, she filled the IP role at the current Nemours Children's Health System in Delaware. Eileen remembers how green she felt, and when her classmates would call from the lab asking about her job, she would answer, "Well, I sit down in my office in the morning, I have an anxiety attack, and then I go."



As Eileen's career grew, so did her family. "I go with my gut, and I tend to trust it." After her 3rd child, she transitioned to other roles adjacent to IPC — Informatics position with Cerner, medical technologist in an ID lab, research coordinator for the Philadelphia Department of Public Health with CHOP and HUP, and data management within the IPC department. As her career progressed, she eventually returned to being an IP and in time grew into IPC leadership.

Proudest professional accomplishment? Most recently, it was the recognition and deference to expertise that Eileen experienced through the pandemic, and how the leadership of MLH recognized the importance of her team. She stated, "I was proud of how the team stepped way out of the box and just did whatever they had to get done and having leadership acknowledge that." Because of this, her department was approved to fill 4 more positions.

Hardest challenge? Developing a strong, diverse IPC program and bringing the team's vision to life. More importantly getting buy-in from leadership, HR, and even the team itself to understand the vision.

Her professional advice? When coming into the field, you have to be a life-long learner. Be open, flexible, and not threatened by the constant need to change. Lastly, be comfortable and humble with not knowing all of the answers at the moment. Have the wisdom to say, "This is a new one on me."

What continues to draw her into the field? Eileen states, "For me now, trying to pass along the passion and love of [our] work. It's the thing I look forward to getting back to the most."

Any advice for new IPs? "Run away! Just kidding." Be ready to ask those curious questions. And know that in IPC, "you can't clear your bench here." If you try, you will burn out. Each day, set your highest priorities and be ready and comfortable to change them at a moment's notice.

Areas that APIC members can ask Eileen for advice? Professional development, leadership, and program development

"I can't imagine myself doing anything else."

Other fun facts about Eileen:

Hobbies: During COVID, she discovered the joys of refurbishing furniture!

Nickname:

"Eileener-Beaner"
(family nickname, as she is the 10th of 11 kids)

Least favorite food: "I love to eat!" But she won't eat oysters or clams.

Hidden talent: Singing Irish tunes during family get-togethers

Go-to karaoke song: Recently "Dust in the Wind"

Eileen can be reached at: ShermanE@MLHS.ORG

