

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE I HAVE FACED with handling an ill person and keeping myself focused

by Lynn Kruger

I don't get into trouble often, but I did get something terribly wrong a few months ago when one of my employees reported that she was tested for TB when she went to the clinic for the fourth time because she wasn't getting to feel any better.

My concern for her overshadowed my judgement and I divulged her situation without her permission in an attempt to get her the medical help she needed and to ensure the safety of my clients and the other staff.

Think about it! Does your immediate concern cloud your thinking?

Although I am obligated to report any illness to Management because she handles refreshments, I had to have her consent to do so.

Can our mistakes challenge us to better equip ourselves with knowledge?

This experience forced me to do some research on the management and health surveillance of food handlers.

It is the joint view of The Department of Health and FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food safety that "it is not easy to maintain medical control over food handlers due to the rapid turnover".

They propose the following strategy for the health surveillance of staff who prepare and serve food:

- Management commitment
- Education and training
- Health interviews
- Reporting illness to management
- Applying basic food handling practices and
- Applying basic personal hygiene practices

Any symptoms or conditions that are stated on page 7 of the GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND HEALTHY SURVEILLANCE OF FOOD published by the Department of Health Directorate:

Food Control in July 2000, disqualifies a person temporarily from their duties. The Guidelines further states that "these measures are aimed at protecting co-workers as well as the public from becoming infected through direct contact with and infected food handler or by means of contaminated food handled by such a person."

Do you agree that it is only the responsibility of Management to assess situations that might put their staff and clients at risk and take appropriate action?

Through this experience I've learned a few very valuable lessons:

- Safety comes first - but never at the expense of someone's dignity!
- Policies and procedures are there to guide and protect Management and Employees.
- If you are unsure, GOOGLE! We live in an age where the information you need is at your fingertips.
- "I'm sorry, I got this wrong" heals a multitude of sins. We all make mistakes and that is okay
- Never leave the 'human' out of human resources!

I am now equipped and focused on the soft issues and not only on the company procedures. This is a very valuable life skill obtained.



Lynn Kruger is the Head of Department: Hospitality and Events at Resolution Circle. She is the titlebearer for PA of the Year Award 2009, a recipient of a Crystal Award and member of PAFSA's Academy of Excellence.

