

Research paper on hygiene and infection in hospitals

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Hygiene and Infection in Hospitals

Hygiene refers to the practices that communities perceive to uphold as preserving healthy living, while an infection is an attack of parasites on a host organism, (Pittet, 2007). Outstanding hygiene practices are paramount in our lives in order to prevent infection and ultimately diseases. Hospitals being public places where both sick and healthy people mingle ought to be hygienically maintained in order to prevent infections (Bloomfield, Aiello, Cookson, O'Boyle, Larson, 2007). The sources of infections in hospitals include hospital staff, patients and the inanimate environment.

It is crucial to maintain hygiene in hospitals to prevent and control infection to patients. Environmental health considerations such as sanitation facilities and adequate water supply to patients, visitors and health care staff are paramount in the maintenance of hygienic conditions and prevention of infections (Peletz & Simuyandi 2011). Studies have shown that hygienic hospital experience lesser cases of nosocomial infections. These are the also known as hospital-acquired infections and entail the infections absent from the patient at the time of admission (Bloomfield, et al 2007).

Two significant types of microorganisms are present on the skin. These are the organisms that normally reside on the skin resident flora and contaminants also called transient flora. Unless introduced into the body by use of medical devices like catheters, resident flora are normally low.

Transient flora are responsible for most hospital infections that result from cross transmission. Hand hygiene is the simplest yet most effective measure in the prevention of nosocomial infections from transient flora (Pittet, 2007). A study by Pratt (2009) showed that proper hand hygiene practices have the potential to reduce dermatitis infections by more than 60 percent.

Hand hygiene intends to decrease the concentration of the skin with transient flora. Several methods can be used to ensure hand hygiene. They include hand washing to remove dirt and hand disinfection using medicated antibacterial soaps or using hand and skin protection rubs to remove microorganisms. The best substances to use are Alcohol-based hand rubs. These rubs act faster, are less irritating and require less application time (Kennedy & Burnett 2011).

Hand antiseptic agents are manufactured to eliminate transient flora rapidly due to their mechanical detergent effects and exert a sustained antimicrobial activity on the remaining flora. Pratt (2009) asserts that the disinfectants also retard the resident flora and, therefore, the disinfectants are suitable when one intends to eliminate microorganisms for long periods of time. Alcohol based products such as chlorhexidine gluconate or povidone iodine) act on the microorganisms faster and are easy to apply.

Alcohol based disinfectants also provide an optimal antimicrobial spectrum. The disinfectants are suitable in the elimination of all bacteria and the clinically relevant viruses, fungi and yeasts (Kennedy & Burnett 2011). Moreover, the application of these disinfectants does not require wash

basins. The hand rubs also act extremely rapidly. These factors, therefore, make the alcohol based hand rubs suitable in the prevention of infections in hospitals where microorganisms abound.

Other than hand rubs hospital hygiene can be improved by proper disposal of waste. Hospital personnel should not only maintain their attire clean but should also disinfect them to ensure hygiene is maintained. In most hospitals, contact between patients is less in comparison to contact an individual patient has with medical personnel and, therefore, it is crucial that medical staff ensure high personal hygiene.

The hospital administration should ensure environmental health considerations such as adequate sanitation facilities and water supply. The facilities should be accessible to all patients, healthcare staff and visitors.

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