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Medical News

EDITED BY GINA PUGLIESE, RN, MS; MARTIN S. FAVERO, PHD

Hand Hygiene Perceptions Among Physicians

Research has shown that physician adherence to hand hygiene remains low in most hospitals. Pittet and colleagues from University of Geneva Hospitals, Geneva, Switzerland, reported on research to identify risk factors for nonadherence and assess beliefs and perceptions associated with hand hygiene among physicians using a cross-sectional survey of physician practices, beliefs, and attitudes toward hand hygiene in a large university hospital in Geneva. Individual observations were made of 163 physicians' hand hygiene practices during routine patient care with documentation of relevant risk factors and a questionnaire to measure the physicians' beliefs and perceptions. Logistic regression identified variables independently associated with adherence. Adherence averaged 57% and varied markedly across medical specialties. In multivariate analysis, adherence was associated with the awareness of being observed, the belief of being a role model for other colleagues, a positive attitude toward hand hygiene after patient contact, and easy access to handrub solution. Conversely, high workload, activities associated with a high risk for cross-transmission, and certain technical medical specialties (surgery, anesthesiology, emergency medicine, and intensive care medicine) were risk factors for nonadherence. The authors concluded that physician adherence to hand hygiene is associated with work and system constraints, as well as knowledge and cognitive factors. At the individual level, strengthening a positive attitude toward hand hygiene and reinforcing the conviction that each individual can influence the group's behavior may improve adherence among physicians. Physicians who work in technical specialties should also be targeted for improvement.

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