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April 2002

Title: A study on Nurses' Knowledge of, Attitude toward and Practice of handwashing in an Acute-care Hospital

Abstract

Evidence shows that handwashing is the single most important procedure and effective infection control measure for preventing nosocomial infection. However, compliance rate was persistently low with handwashing among hospital personnel in the past studies. Consequently, many studies have been performed to investigate which factors influencing handwashing practices of hospital personnel. Those studies have evaluated the frequency of handwashing, impact of various interventions on handwashing frequency and handwashing techniques. However, seldom any local research has been published on these practices, which focused on nurses working in medical department within hospital environment, who are in frequent and close contact with our clients among the hospital personnel.

The purpose of this study was to investigate nurses' knowledge, attitude and practice towards handwashing in an acute-care hospital. It attempted to identify the relationships among knowledge, attitude, practice, rank, age, sex, post-registration nursing experience, training, and attendance of post-graduate handwashing refreshment program. It aimed on gaining an in-depth understanding about nurses, knowledge, attitude and practice on handwashing in an acute care hospital so as to facilitate future policy planning by hospital administrators, arouse nurses' awareness on the importance of handwashing and enhancing the efficacy of prevention strategies for hospital acquired nosocomial infection.

This was a descriptive survey. A self-administered structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Questionnaires were distributed to 100 nurses with a response rate of 59%. Nurses working in the clinical area of medical department of an acute-care hospital were selected as subjects using convenience sampling. Descriptive statistics were used to organize and summarize the collected data.

The findings indicated that nurses' knowledge on handwashing for preventing infection was good and their attitude towards handwashing was positive and viewed

prevention of infection as the most motivating factor for handwashing. On self-reported handwashing practice, nurses reported that they washed their hands frequently, especially for those activities more likely to result in contamination of hands. There were no significant differences found among nurses' level of knowledge, related attitude toward handwashing, handwashing practice between rank, age, sex, post-registration nursing experience, training and attendance of post-graduate handwashing refreshment program. However, there was a positive correlation between knowledge, attitude.

The results of this study suggested that multifaceted approaches that include training, education, continue monitoring and feedback to staff on handwashing should be implemented to achieve optimal compliance with handwashing.