

Title: A survey of nurses' knowledge, attitude and practice on and washing

ABSTRACT

Background: Numerous studies report that handwashing reduces the risk of infection in patients and personnel. In Hong Kong, there are few local studies concerned with nurses' knowledge, attitude and practice on hand washing.

Objectives: This study aimed to examine nurses' knowledge, attitude and practice towards handwashing in local health care setting. It also attempted to identify the influence of nurses' demographic background to the above study variables. Further objectives were exploring the associations among nurses' knowledge, attitude and practice on handwashing.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was carried out in a regional general hospital in Hong Kong. Nurses who were either working in an adult intensive care unit (ICU), private or overflow ward were administered the self-reported questionnaires in handwashing. The questionnaire consisted of 10 binary knowledge items as well as 15 attitude and 16 practice items in the assessment with 5-point Likert scales. Higher scores indicated more positive results.

Results: Fifty-two out of 97 names participated in the study. Results showed that nurses' knowledge on handwashing was on the high side (mean 7.8, S.D. = 1.25). Nurses' attitude on handwashing was positive (mean 3.59, S.D. = .36) and nurses' practice on handwashing was very good (mean 4.25, S.D. = .56). Significant difference was detected between nurses who worked in ICU and general wards regarding their practice in handwashing (Mann-Whitney U test, $p = .001$). However, there were no significant differences between them regarding their knowledge and attitude. There was a mild correlation between attitude and practice (Spearman correlation coefficient = 0.39, $p = 0.005$). On the contrary, there were discrepancies in the association between knowledge and attitude as well as between knowledge and practice.

Conclusions: Results suggest that education alone is not likely to be associated with changes in handwashing attitude and practice. Multifaceted approaches, including continuous in-service training, monitoring and feedback to nurses on handwashing practice, should be focused. Further studies and audits by the

nursing research team of the Hospital Authority to evaluate the effects of interventions on knowledge, attitude and practice is recommended.