

Title: A survey of nurses' knowledge of, attitude about and practice on handwashing in a Hong Kong hospital with an Infectious Disease Unit

Abstract

Hand washing is an important part of daily practice for prevention of nosocomial infection. In 1943, Oliver Wendell Holmes concluded independently that puerperal fever was spread by the hands of health personnel (Rotter, 1999). Handwashing is the process help to remove dirt, organic material, and transient microorganisms (Larson, 1995). Hand decontamination is considered an important method of reducing cross-infection in clinical situation (Ward, 1992; Gould, 1995; Heenan, 1996). Thus, handwashing is essential to disease control and nurses are supposed to follow the practice of frequent handwashing, which is benefit to patients. However, poor compliance occurs commonly in real situations (Bauer, 1997; Hand, 1998; Jean, 1998). Nurses working in an infectious disease hospital are in constant contact with high infectious disease suffers in the workplace. So, they could be potential disease carriers and participate in cross-infection. It is becoming more important to investigate nurses' knowledge of, attitude about and practice on handwashing and make recommendation to promote higher compliance, especially in a hospital with an infectious disease unit.

The aim of this study was to investigate nurses' knowledge of, attitude about and practice on handwashing in a Hong Kong hospital with an infectious disease unit. In this study, a quantitative study was conducted. The possible factors, that included age, sex, rank, academic level, nursing experience, experience in infection disease unit, type of wards and attendance of handwashing training, which might affected the knowledge level, attitude and practice of handwashing among nurses and the relationship between knowledge level, attitude and real practice of handwashing would be examined and tried to identify in this study. The ultimate aim was to provide guidance for planning strategies to improve the standards of handwashing among nurses. Also, the most importance was to enhance the awareness of nurses on importance of handwashing to prevent the hospital acquired nosocomial infection in a Hong Kong hospital with an infectious disease unit.

The design of this study was a non-experimental research. The study was primarily based on questionnaire survey and its design was descriptive, correlational and cross-sectional. There were 100 copies of self-developed

questionnaires which were distributed in 10 different wards where included an infectious disease unit. Convenience sampling was selected in this study. The response rate was 72%.

The finding showed that the nurses' knowledge level about handwashing was quite high and the practice on handwashing was good. Also, the attitude about handwashing was positive. In addition, there was a positive correlation between practice and attitude. However, there were no significant differences found among nurses' knowledge level, attitude toward handwashing, real practice on handwashing between age, sex, rank, working unit, clinical experience, academic level, and attendance of refreshment program on handwashing.