

WHAT WE LEARNED

Our research focused on current stethoscope disinfection policies, current trends in stethoscope disinfection practice, and new evidence on best practice for disinfecting stethoscopes in order to reduce the spread of infection.

BACKGROUND

Patient safety is one of a nurse's main responsibilities. With the rise of infection control practices, stethoscope disinfection has been overlooked. Stethoscopes are referred to as non-critical items in healthcare and there are no current protocols for disinfection. Holding to the values and ethics of beneficence and nonmaleficence, healthcare professionals must be more diligent in providing a safe atmosphere for their patients.

OBJECTIVE

- The viewer will be able to distinguish current disinfection practices from new evidence-based practice guidelines.
- The viewer will be able to effectively demonstrate proper disinfection of a stethoscope.
- The viewer will be able to educate peers on the proper disinfection technique for stethoscopes.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Current disinfection policies are ineffective.
- New evidence shows that cleaning stethoscopes between each patient with a 70% isopropyl alcohol swab is effective in eliminating bacteria including methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.
- A study implemented at Boston Children's Hospital spent roughly \$17 per patient room to install the equipment and materials needed to clean stethoscopes which in turn increased the rate of stethoscope disinfection from 13% to 67% among nurses (Zaghi, Jing, Graham, Potter-Bynoe, and Sandora, 2013).



MAJOR THEMES

1. Stethoscopes are not being disinfected on a regular basis or are being disinfected with the wrong agent.
2. Current policies state a stethoscope must be cleaned when it is visibly soiled
3. Healthcare professionals neglect to properly disinfect their stethoscopes because:
 - Inappropriate guidelines are in place
 - Many feel like it takes too much time
 - Resources are not readily available
4. Current studies suggest that cleaning stethoscopes between each patient use with a 70% isopropyl alcohol swab from the bell to the earpieces, including the tubing is effective in removing bacteria (Tang, Worster, Srigley, and Main, 2011).

CONCLUSION

- Disinfect stethoscopes before and after each patient.
- Clean entire stethoscope from ear pieces, down the tubing, to the bell.
- Implement teaching in lectures, clinical settings, and CE classes.
- Move towards developing policies in hospitals and associations.