

MRSA pre-screening effective in reducing otolaryngic surgical infection rates

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Pre-operative screening of patients for methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) may be an effective way to reduce infection rates following otolaryngic surgeries, according to new research published in the January 2009 issue of *Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery*.

The study, conducted by researchers at the Massachusetts Ear & Eye Infirmary, is the first to review otolaryngic procedures, and reviewed the medical records of 420 patients. Of the 241 non-pre-screened patients during a one-year period, nine patients had staphylococcus aureus infections, including two post-operative MRSA surgical site infections. Of the 179 patients pre-screened using a nasal swab, 24 patients were identified as having staphylococcus aureus colonies, and underwent pre-operative treatment; none of these patient cases resulted in post-operative MRSA infections.

MRSA, which was discovered in 1961, has emerged as an increasingly fatal infection in patients, as the superbug is resistant to most forms of penicillin and cephalosporins. MRSA commonly colonizes in the nostrils, can cause life-threatening pneumonias, can necrotize skin and wound infections, and is a particular risk to children, the elderly, and people with weak immune systems.

Due to particular concerns about MRSA infections in otolaryngic surgeries, the authors recommend further, larger studies, with an emphasis on high-risk patients, including those with multiple

comorbidities, head and neck cancer patients, patients receiving implanted devices, and patients with prior hospitalizations or multiple courses of antibiotics.

Source: American Academy of Otolaryngology -- Head and Neck Surgery

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