

Sharing a hospital room increases risk of 'super bugs'

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Staying in a multi-bed hospital room dramatically increases the risk of acquiring a serious infectious disease, Queen's University researchers have discovered.

A new study led by [infectious diseases](#) expert Dr. Dick Zoutman says the chance of acquiring serious infections like *C. difficile* (*Clostridium difficile*) rises with the addition of every [hospital](#) roommate.

"If you're in a two, three or four-bedded room, each time you get a new roommate your risk of acquiring these serious infections increases by 10 per cent," says Dr. Zoutman, professor of Community Health and Epidemiology at Queen's. "That's a substantial risk, particularly for longer hospital stays when you can expect to have many different roommates."

Dr. Zoutman suggests hospitals need to consider more private rooms in their planning. "Despite other advances, multi-bedded rooms are still part of hospital design in the 21st century. Building hospitals with all private rooms is not yet the standard in Ontario or Canada - but it should be."

Also on the Queen's team are master's student Meghan Hamel and Associate Professor Christopher O'Callaghan. The findings are published on-line in the [American Journal of Infection Control](#).

The researchers argue that it's cheaper in the long run to build more

private rooms because of the high costs of treating people with superbugs. For facilities with multi-bed rooms that are unable to take on major redesign, Dr. Zoutman suggests converting four-bed rooms to two-bed semi-privates, and changing semi-private rooms in high-risk areas to private rooms, as much as possible.

"One important way to improve patient safety in our hospitals is to reduce the number of roommates that patients are exposed to during their hospital stay," he stresses. "Especially in acute care hospitals, where the risks are highest, we need to change our room configurations as much as current resources will allow, and strive to design and build new hospital facilities with entirely private rooms."

Provided by Queen's University

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