

# Horizontal infection prevention strategy to reduce mrsa infections, increase patient safety

October 24 2012

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(Medical Xpress)—High compliance with hand hygiene and focusing on other simple infection control measures on medical, surgical and neuroscience intensive care units resulted in reduced rates of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) infection by 95 percent in a nine-year study, according to research findings by Virginia Commonwealth University physicians presented during IDWeek 2012.

Most hospitals use vertical infection [prevention strategies](#), which focus on culturing for patients harboring organisms such as MRSA and isolating those patients. This can cost millions of dollars annually and puts patients at risk for problems that occur when the patient is isolated. The VCU team took a different approach and employed a horizontal [infection prevention](#) strategy of high compliance with [hand washing](#) that prevents not just MRSA, but all infections that are transmitted via contact.

"Our study showed that using a simple approach over a nine-year period resulted in low rates of MRSA infection," said lead investigator Michael B. Edmond, M.D., M.P.H., chair of the Division of Infectious Diseases in the VCU School of Medicine.

"Patient safety is the key benefit to this approach. We found that it not only prevents MRSA, but other infections that are transmitted via contact. It can also safe hospitals a lot of money," said Edmond.

"And we know that isolating patients results in anxiety, depression, increased risks of falls and bed sores, and fewer visits by doctors and nurses. Our approach reduces the need for patient isolation," he said.

In the study, trained infection preventionists conducted surveillance for infections throughout the medical, surgical and neuroscience intensive care units for a period of nine years. These experts used Centers for Disease Control methodology to perform surveillance.

According to Edmond, the results achieved to date validate the team's approach and will lead to further efforts to drive [hand hygiene](#) compliance even higher than the current compliance rate of 93 percent.

Provided by Virginia Commonwealth University

Citation: Horizontal infection prevention strategy to reduce mrsa infections, increase patient safety (2012, October 24) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-10-horizontal-infection-strategy-mrsa-infections.html>

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