

Clinical workstations: An overlooked reservoir for deadly bacteria?

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Clinical workstations within hospital intensive care units (ICUs) may get overlooked during routine cleanings and could therefore harbor more dangerous bacteria than regularly cleaned objects in patient areas, according to a pilot study published in the December issue of the *American Journal of Infection Control*, the official publication of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC).

Researchers from Western Sydney University in Australia conducted a [pilot study](#) using three different sampling methods in a busy [intensive care](#) unit (ICU) in an attempt to discover if and where multidrug-resistant organisms (MDROs) might still be lurking in spite of routine environmental cleaning. Investigators traced the steps of healthcare workers (HCW) in between their workstations and patient bedsides and sampled commonly touched objects along the way for MDROs. Nine of thirteen confirmed MDROs from any area came from clinical workstations (on chairs, clipboards, keyboards, telephones, and a computer mouse).

As a secondary finding of the study, combined ATP testing on environmental surfaces was more than seven times as likely to positively identify MDROs as microbial swabbing (33.3 percent vs 4.3 percent.). ATP testing is a process of rapidly measuring actively growing microorganisms through detection of [adenosine triphosphate](#) (ATP) - a marker of bio-contamination.

"In this pilot study, we found that many of the high touch objects from which MDROs were recovered were not items included in cleaning protocols," state the study authors. "The findings of this study suggest the need to review the hygiene standards adopted in the clinical workspace, away from the immediate patient zones in busy ICUs, and indicate that ATP testing may help identify high touch objects with less than optimal cleanliness."

More information: "A pilot study into locating the bad bugs in a busy intensive care unit," by Greg S. Whiteley, Jessica L. Night, Chris W. Derry, Slade O. Jensen, Karen Vickery and Iain B. Gosbel, appears in the *American Journal of Infection Control*, Volume 43, Issue 12 (December 2015).

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