

Micro News

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1. Are your disposable gloves contaminated?

A Chicago study investigates bacterial contamination of unused gloves inside open glove boxes from patient rooms.¹ 75% of the gloves were contaminated with bacteria (mainly hand commensals such as coagulase-negative staphylococci) but a few pathogens were detected including a patient strain of carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. Unused gloves in patient rooms may act as a reservoir for nosocomial pathogens.

2. Are you watching what you eat?

A new strain of community-associated MRSA is spreading in Holland linked to pig farms called Pig-Associated (PA-MRSA) (based on the epidemiology) or Non-Typeable (NT-MRSA) (based on PFGE typing). A study from some researchers in Holland found that 34 (43%) of 79 raw meat samples harboured *Staphylococcus aureus*, including two MRSAs, one of which was NT-MRSA.² The concentration of MRSA contamination was low and detected by enrichment culture only; however, the discovery of any amount of MRSA in raw foods at the point of sale is concerning.

3. Opening Pandora's box of *S. aureus* carriage in healthcare workers

A study from Johns Hopkins in Baltimore investigated *S. aureus* nasal colonisation in healthcare workers.³ The findings suggest that the carriage of MRSA is low (2% of the 200 HCWs surveyed) and none of the MRSA strains were community-associated types, which have been associated with infections in HCW in the same institution.⁴ The personal risk associated with caring for patients with healthcare-associated MRSA appears to be low.

4. *C. difficile*: it's airborne!

Several studies in the past have failed to isolate *C. difficile* from ward air. A recent study from Leeds has identified *C. difficile* in a high proportion of air samples collected on a care-of-the-elderly ward in a bay used to nurse patients with *C. difficile*-associated disease.⁵ Surprisingly, concomitant surface sampling using small contact plates did not yield any *C. difficile*, suggesting that the airborne *C. difficile* spores did not settle on surfaces. In the light of these findings, further evaluation of the role of airborne dissemination of *C. difficile* spores is warranted.

5. MRSA environmental contamination on a London neonatal unit

During a small outbreak of ciprofloxacin-susceptible EMRSA-15 on a London neonatal unit, MRSA was cultured from 8 (16.7%) of 48 surfaces sampled, including the outbreak strain from 4 surfaces and distinct MRSA from 4 surfaces.⁶ The outbreak strain was cultured from surfaces after terminal

cleaning and from communal surfaces; improved environmental decontamination was part of the outbreak response. Another feature of the outbreak was the fact that the use of ciprofloxacin-containing screening media did not support the growth of the outbreak strain. The use of ciprofloxacin-containing media should be avoided, particularly in paediatrics where CA-MRSA, which is typically susceptible to ciprofloxacin, may be increasing in frequency.

6. Norovirus outbreak traced to a contaminated keyboard

An outbreak of Norovirus occurred in a US elementary school affecting 103 (39%) of 266 staff members and children at the school.⁶ One classroom in particular was associated with transmission, and this was the only classroom in which staff and students shared computers. Norovirus DNA matching the outbreak strain was detected on one such shared computer keyboard in this classroom. Fomites that are shared but not commonly cleaned, such as computer keyboards, should be decontaminated during outbreaks of Norovirus.

7. And finally...a sneaky drink from the garden hose...

A man seeking a refreshing drink from his garden hose on a hot summer's day got more than he bargained for when he contracted *Legionella*!⁸ Could garden hose usage be a previously unrecognised risk factor for *Legionella*?

References

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