



Call For Perfume Ban in Hospitals



Large surveys of the general public indicate that people have sensitivity to scents that are worn by others. Artificial scents may be designed to make us more attractive but in reality they can result in unintended harm to people who are vulnerable. That is why artificial scents are deemed to be inappropriate in certain environments, especially in hospitals.

The surveys show that nearly 30 percent of people report being sensitive to scents worn by others. 27 percent of those who have asthma indicate that their symptoms are worsened with exposure to artificial scents. Emerging evidence confirms this and suggests that asthma can be aggravated by artificial scents. It is believed that nearly 47 percent of the burden of asthma can be attributed to allergic, eosinophilic mechanisms while the remainder may be caused by irritant-triggered neutrophilic inflammation in the airways. An asthma attack can be triggered by stimuli such as second-hand cigarette smoke, cleaning fluids such as bleach, perfume and other strong odours.

Since hospitals comprise of vulnerable patients - often with asthma and other upper airway or skin sensitivities, exposure to artificial scents during interaction with other patients, staff members and visitors can worsen their clinical conditions. Therefore, there is very little justification as to why hospitals should tolerate artificial scents.

While federal and provincial human rights acts require accommodation for employees who are sensitive to scents in the workplace, there is no such requirement for patients in hospitals or clinics. There have been cases where workers have sued companies to have workplace policies changed regarding artificial scents but for patients, similar opportunities do not exist.

Public places usually promote a scent-free environment and some hospitals also do the same. However, since this is not a legal requirement, it is not a mandatory policy in hospitals and is also not a criteria that needs to be fulfilled for accreditation.

Since the impact of artificial scents on clinical conditions can be quite negative, it is important to ensure that the air we breathe in in healthcare facilities is free from artificial scents. This should become a uniform policy as it can help promote the safety of all parties involved - patients, staff and visitors. Hospitals need to take the lead especially for patients that are more vulnerable and susceptible to the negative consequences of artificial scents.

Source: [Canada Medical Association Journal](#)

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