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High Rates of MRSA Transmission in Nursing Homes

According to a new study published in *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology* , healthcare workers often contaminate their gloves and gowns during every day care of nursing home residents with drug resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA.

Mary-Claire Roghmann, MD, lead author of the study explains that healthcare workers are a major vector for MRSA transmission from one resident to another. One in four nursing home residents harbours MRSA but because guidance on preventive measures such as the use of barrier precautions are limited, therefore MRSA contamination is higher.

The primary goal of this research was to determine the most important times when healthcare workers should wear gowns and gloves. This was achieved by measuring the risk of MRSA contamination during different times. The study was conducted at 13 community-based nursing homes in Maryland and Michigan and included 403 residents. The participants were assessed for MRSA colonisation and it was also evaluated whether interactions with healthcare workers lead to contamination of their gowns and gloves by MRSA bacteria.

The findings show that approximately 28 percent of residents harboured MRSA. Glove contamination was 24 percent as compared to gown contamination at 14 percent. The results emphasise the need for hand hygiene between residents and healthcare workers.

Glove and gown contamination is linked to activities such as dressing residents, transferring them, brushing their teeth, combing their hair, and changing lines and diapers. During most of these activities, healthcare workers do not wear their gowns.

"This research is particularly important since residents in these communities require a lot of assistance from their healthcare workers. New MRSA acquisition in nursing homes is substantial. Our study, for the first time, defines the type of care that increases the risk of transmission and suggests modifications to the current indications of gown and glove use," said Roghmann.

Source: Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America

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