Healthcare: Keeping Healthcare Workers Free from MRSA

What’s at Stake?

Staph is a very common, generally problem free, bacteria that lives in the nose or on the skin of up to 1 in 3 people. Staph only causes a problem if it gets somewhere it shouldn’t, such as into a wound, or the blood.

Staph can be easily treated with antibiotics but over time some bacteria have developed a resistance. These strains are commonly known as MRSA, Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus and can cause a variety of problems ranging from skin infections to pneumonia.

What’s the Danger?

If a person has a MRSA infection they need to start treatment quickly, or else they can develop sepsis (blood poisoning) which can be fatal. People with MRSA can be treated with antibiotics.

MRSA can be passed to patients from unclean hands of healthcare workers or visitors, or from contaminated bed linens, bed rails, and medical equipment.

People will not realize they have an infection unless they become ill or have a swab test. It is important to always wash your hands.

How to Protect Yourself

5 easy ways to keep yourself safe from MRSA

1. Clean hands

    - Wash your hands often taking extra care to wash them at the

critical 5 moments of hand hygiene:
    - before touching a patient;
    - before clean/aseptic procedures;
    - after body fluid exposure/risk;
    - after touching a patient;
    - after touching patient surroundings.
- Help control the potential risk by reminding colleagues and visitors to wash their hands – before and after seeing the patient.

2. Reduce the spread

- Patients with MRSA should be nursed in a single room.
- Follow any contact precautions that are in place, for example, staff and family are required to wear a gown and mask on entering.
- Use alcohol rub upon entry and exit.

3. Clean up

- Ensure the patient's bed area is cleaned according to protocol; and
- Launder patient clothing and bedding according to protocol.
- Finally, wash work clothes either at work following the laundering process, or at home according to home laundering protocol.

4. Keep it covered

- Cover both your wounds and the patient's wounds as soon as possible.
- Contain and dispose of any sputum, wound seepage, and blood quickly.

5. Keep yourself MRSA free

- Attend pre-employment and ongoing MRSA screening provided by your employer.
- Report exposure to MRSA that happens at home or work.
- Complete the course of antibiotics you are given – either for Staph or MRSA.

Final Word

MRSA is a serious problem in healthcare settings. It is important that healthcare workers are thorough in their hand hygiene routines as hand contamination is the major cause of infection spread.