

FEATURES

Controlling MRSA in LTC

By Peter J. Sheldon

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According to a 2007 study in the Journal of the American Medical Association, senior citizens are four times more likely to contract MRSA. Once MRSA has become firmly established in a facility, it is difficult to eliminate.

Preventing a MRSA outbreak is critical and often entails a multi-step effort:

- * Recognize and identify sites of infection or colonization of MRSA.
- * Take appropriate infection control measures.
- * Have appropriate communication and personnel policies related to MRSA.

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KEEP IT CLEAN

While MRSA is most frequently transmitted person-to-person via contaminated hands, often from inadequate hand hygiene practices of healthcare workers, it can also be transmitted via airborne droplets, such as from a coughing resident. Thus, strict hand-washing protocols together with proper surface disinfection play a critical role in preventing the spread of MRSA.

LTCFs should look for building service contractors or cleaning service providers who employ daily aseptic, health-based cleaning programs that focus on preventing cross-contamination through

the proper use of tools, chemicals and color-coding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Use EPA-registered, hospital-grade disinfectants. Deployed with the proper dwell time, these can reduce the risk of surface contact transmissions of MRSA and other pathogens.
- Use color-coded microfiber cloths. Because each color-coded cloth is used in a single, designated area of a facility, they are more effective at removing soil and germs, and reduce cross contamination.
- Use bucket immersion instead of pour bottles to apply disinfectant to cleaning cloths. A study last year by the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America found that enhanced cleaning protocols such as this can reduce the spread of MRSA to patients exposed to rooms in which the prior occupant had been colonized or infected.
- Use no-dip, flat mops. By only using clean solution to remove dirt and soils, these mops reduce the risk of cross-contamination.
- Use touch-free spray and vacuum system technologies. For treatment and patient areas tolerant to a wet cleaning process, this technology provides the most complete disinfection and matter removal of any cleaning application.
- Deep clean high-touch points. Just because a surface appears clean to the naked eye doesn't mean it isn't harboring MRSA or other bacteria. High-touch points include light switches, doorknobs, bed rails, remote controls, desktops, elevator buttons and the like. Many of these areas tend to slip through the cleaning process because they are small, specialized surfaces-but with so many hands coming into contact with them, they represent some of the key places where germ re-contamination occurs and where infection spreads.

· Introduce a hand-hygiene program. Your cleaning service provider can introduce hand sanitizers into restrooms, lobbies and break areas, making access to hand-hygiene tools more readily available throughout your facility to reinforce good hand-hygiene practices for healthcare providers and your residents.

By combining proper surface disinfection with a rigorous hand-hygiene program, long-term care facilities can make great strides in reducing risks associated with the often deadly MRSA and many other pathogenic bacteria and provide for the well-being of their residents with cleaner, safer living environments.

Peter J. Sheldon Sr., CBSE, is vice president of operations, Coverall Health-Based Cleaning System.SM