Clean hospital surfaces can prevent fatalities

By ACSH Staff — April 3, 2014

Dr. Betsy McCaughey, a former ACSH Trustee, redirects the blame game in her most recent piece, Lethal Lies About Hospital Infections. Recently the Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported hospital infections were falling, and acknowledged the most common bacterial origin of these infections was Clostridium difficile. To fight against the rapid spread of C. difficile in hospitals, the CDC recommends prudence in antibiotic use. However, Dr. McCaughey shifts the focus and stresses the solution is much simpler: clean hospital surfaces.

It is necessary to highlight the threat of these bacterial infections, and place in perspective the feasible and highly effective solution available to our healthcare providers today. C. difficile infections take as many lives as AIDS, claiming 9 percent of patients who are admitted for hospital stays. These fatalities can be prevented with the now studied and proven concept of decontaminating hospital surfaces. Indeed, the Mayo Clinic reduced C. difficile infections by 79 percent in a pilot study, simply by wiping surfaces near the patient bedsides with bleach wipes.

Dr. McCaughey concedes proper antibiotic use is a long term resolution to significantly reducing C. difficile infections. The logic is as follows: antibiotic intake kills protective gut bacteria in patients gastrointestinal tract, lowering host defenses, and allowing C. difficile to take hold. However, the more immediate solution is not far off in the distant future, but here now for implementation. She concludes, The CDC tells patients to ask their doctors whether they are on the correct antibiotics. What they should be advised is to ask for a clean hospital room and help cleaning their hands, especially before meals. Read her complete piece here.

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