

Infection prevention and Control in the Healthcare Environment

Get it Right - RIGHT WORK PLACE

Infection prevention and control is deservedly high on the agenda for patients, nurses, HCSWs and decision-makers. The Royal College of Nursing launched its Wipe it Out campaign in 2005 providing guidance and information to promote excellence in practice and influence change at the organisation level.

Infection control is an essential component of care and which has too often been undervalued in recent years. The frontlines of twenty-first century care combine tremendous technology and expertise side by side with staff shortages and concerns about hygiene. RCN Wales believes that our members, other healthcare professionals, the public and Government can work together to minimise the risks.

Our guidance for members emphasises standard precautions such as hand hygiene, using personal protective equipment and the safe handling and disposal of waste. RCN Wales publishes leaflets for patients giving advice on hygiene, dealing with visitors and personal possessions. We also publish advice for visitors recommending adherence to visiting numbers, hygiene and practical tips such as not visiting if they are unwell.

The incidence of health care associated infections cannot be reduced by targeting the cleanliness of healthcare environments alone. However, as part of a broader strategy including most notably hand hygiene, antimicrobial prescribing and isolation facilities improving the cleanliness of healthcare environments is fundamental.

RCN Wales was delighted when the Welsh Assembly Government accepted the recommendations of the **Free to Lead Free to Care** report (2008) which included recommendations on hospital cleanliness and RCN Wales looks forward to the implementation.

The following suggested key policy actions are for the Welsh Assembly Government to implement in the NHS but are equally applicable to independent healthcare organisations.



KEY POLICY ACTIONS

- All nursing staff should have access to effective accessible and well tolerated hand decontaminants at the point of care/treatment.
- Nursing staff should have access to appropriately trained and resourced 24 hours cleaning services in all acute health care facilities as recommended in **Free to Lead Free to Care**.
- An easy to use tool that nurses can use to measure environmental cleanliness should be developed as recommended in **Free to Lead Free to Care**.
- Access to annual and ongoing infection control training updates must be supported with protected study time.
- Products for cleaning and infection control should be standardised across Wales as recommended in **Free to Lead Free to Care**.
- Ward sisters/charge nurses should be able to request a 'deep clean' of their facilities following outbreaks, refurbishments and where standards have consistently fallen below national standards as recommended in **Free to Lead Free to Care**.
- The provision of dedicated decontamination facilities for acute and community healthcare environments must be integrated into relevant guidance for new and renovated healthcare premises in order to enable the safe decontamination of patient furniture and non-invasive equipment at local level.