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Effect of Education and Performance Feedback on Handwashing in Two Mexican Hospitals of Guanajuato

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Background: Patients admitted to hospitals are at risk of acquiring nosocomial infections. Many peer-reviewed studies show that handwashing (HW) significantly reduces hospital infections and mortality rates. Our objective was to evaluate the effects of education and performance feedback on handwashing compliance before contact with patients in two Intensive care Units in two Public Hospitals in Mexico City. We performed an observational study of health care workers (HCW) to measure the effect of education alone plus performance feed-back.

Methods: Two ICUs, of two public hospitals were studied for adherence to a handwashing protocol. The observed healthcare workers included physicians, nursing personnel, and ancillary staff. Following initial observations to establish baseline rates of HW (phase 1), we evaluated the effect of education plus performance feed-back (phase 2).

Results: At Celaya Hospital phase one was from November 2003 to May 2004, and phase two was from June 2004 to July 2004.

At Irapuato Hospital, phase one was from November 2003 to February 2004, and phase two was from March 2004 to August 2004.

We observed 548 patient contacts during phase one, and 325 during phase two.

During phase one, the baseline rate of handwashing before contact with patients was 21.16% (116/548), during phase two, with education and performance feedback, handwashing increased to 56.30% (183/325) (RR 2.66; 95% CI 2.11 - 3.36; P value: 0.0000).

Conclusions: In this study, HW policies, education, and performance feedback of the HCW significantly improve worker adherence to the handwashing protocol.