
A look at The Joint Commission

Improve hand hygiene with free monograph

Preventing infections is critical to patient safety. A monograph from The Joint Commission offers surgeons and their team members a new way to focus on an important aspect of infection prevention—compliance with recommended hand hygiene practices.

Effective hand hygiene practices have long been recognized as the most important way to reduce the transmission of potentially deadly germs in health care settings, including the surgical suite. The new monograph, *Measuring Hand Hygiene Adherence: Overcoming the Challenges*, is the result of a two-year collaboration with major infection prevention and control leadership organizations in the U.S. and abroad to identify effective approaches for measuring adherence to hand hygiene guidelines in health care organizations.

In addition to The Joint Commission, the participating organizations include the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology Inc., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America, the World Health Organization World Alliance for Patient Safety, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, and the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases.

Measuring hand hygiene performance has long been complicated because of the need to monitor the practices of many different care providers in numerous locations for sufficient periods of time. Without standardized approaches for measuring hand hygiene performance, it is impossible to determine whether overall performance is improving, deteriorating, or unchanged as new strategic interventions are introduced.

The Joint Commission's National Patient Safety Goals require accredited organizations to follow recognized hand hygiene guidelines; however, studies continue to show that adherence to these guidelines is lacking. This finding is due, in part, to the variation in approaches to measurement, which makes rates of adherence difficult to compare.

The monograph provides a framework to help health care workers make necessary decisions about when, why, and how to measure compliance with hand hygiene. The monograph systematically reviews the strengths and weaknesses of commonly used approaches.

Examples of measurement methods and tools in the monograph, which also includes references to evidence-based guidelines and published literature, were submitted by

organizations through the Consensus Measurement in Hand Hygiene Project. The project was supported by an unrestricted educational grant from GOJO Industries, Akron, OH.

Electronic copies of the monograph are available on The Joint Commission's Web site at http://www.jointcommission.org/PatientSafety/InfectionControl/hh_monograph.htm. One free printed copy is available by calling The Joint Commission's Customer Service Center at 630-792-5800, option 5, or sending an e-mail to customerservice@jointcommission.org.

Correction

In the memorial for David Coston Sabiston, Jr., MD, FACS, which appeared in the May *Bulletin* (page 39), it was stated that Dr. Sabiston accepted the James B. Duke Professorship of Surgery at Duke University in 1963. Dr. Sabiston accepted the professorship in 1964. The editors regret the error.