

Hand Hygiene in Long Term Living Facilities

Wes Hampton, University of Washington School of Medicine. RUOP 2016

Purpose:

- To change alcohol hand sanitizing stations in assisted living facilities in order to increase hand hygiene compliance and decrease rates of infection in the town of Thermopolis, WY.

Background:

- The town of Thermopolis has a population of nearly 5,000 people, 22.6% of whom are above the age of 65, which is significantly higher than the state average.
- Many of these individuals live in long-term assisted living homes and are immunocompromised to some degree, as such there is a need for increased protection against infection.

Methods:

- Conducted community interviews with the public health office and nursing staff at Thermopolis Rehabilitation and Care Center (TRCC).
- Performed a literature review and the suggested improvements were found to have significant impact.
- Attaching lights to the top of dispensers resulted in doubling of hand hygiene compliance.
- Placing the dispensers in the center of a lobby rather than at the periphery resulted in over five times increased compliance.

Results:

- The proposed changes to alcohol sanitation dispensers at Thermopolis Rehabilitation and Care Center were presented to the director of nursing for the facility.
- The findings from the literature review were given to the facility as a reference should they choose to enact the proposed changes.



Discussion:

- The proposed program would be viable and very effective in this population and has the potential to significantly reduce risk of infection within the facility.
- Changing the placement of alcohol sanitizing dispensers could present a fall risk and lights could irritate some residence with specific health problems.
- This could be overcome by making the dispensers more conspicuous through color changes rather than using flashing lights.
- TRCC was very accommodating throughout the process, but as with any large facility it would take a significant amount of time to push through any proposed changes.
- This program could expand by placing more dispensers throughout the facility, increasing the education of residents and visitors on why they should use the dispensers, and making improvements to soap and water hand washing.