

Should researchers wash their hands of hand washing?

April 18 2007

Despite the high profile given to hand washing in hospitals, there is still little robust evidence to show which are the best ways to improve hand hygiene.

Health care-associated infection is a major cause of illness and death, and effective hand hygiene is thought to be one of the best ways to prevent it.

A team of Cochrane Researchers therefore performed a systematic review to determine whether strategies to improve hand hygiene are effective.

Sadly they could only locate two trials that were worthy of consideration, and both were poorly controlled. The conclusion they could draw was that a single teaching session was unlikely to improve hand hygiene even in the short-term.

"We desperately need some good research that will begin to show which interventions can bring about change in people's behaviour that will lead to increased hand hygiene," says Dinah Gould, Cochrane Review Author, who works at the School of Nursing and Midwifery at City University, London.

"In addition to preventing unnecessary spread of disease, good hand hygiene is highly desirable on aesthetic grounds alone, it forms an important indicator of the quality of health care and should continue to

be promoted in all clinical settings," says Gould.

Source: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Citation: Should researchers wash their hands of hand washing? (2007, April 18) retrieved 20 November 2023 from

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