

THE BUFFALO NEWS

Lack of cleanliness causes serious hospital infections

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Missing from the recent News article on hospital infections was any mention of the single largest cause—lack of cleanliness. Bacteria are transmitted from patient to patient on the uncleaned hands of medical personnel and their inadequately cleaned equipment such as blood pressure cuffs, stethoscopes, bed rails and privacy curtains.

Recent studies confirm that the number one predictor of which hospital patients pick up the nasty drug-resistant germ VRE (vancomycin resistant Enterococcus) is who occupied the patient's room in the preceding two weeks. Despite being "cleaned," these rooms remain contaminated because surfaces are routinely overlooked, or just given a quick spray and wipe.

More attention needs to be paid to cleaning in hospitals, and to the use of new technologies such as coatings for hard surfaces and anti-microbial fabrics for curtains, scrubs and bedding to protect patients from bacteria.

In many parts of New York, restaurants are inspected for cleanliness, but not hospitals. You can go home and make your own dinner, but you can't operate on yourself.

Betsy McCaughey

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