

EMBARGOED UNTIL
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news release

NHSScotland Hand Hygiene compliance shows positive results

Today the National Hand Hygiene NHS Campaign, Compliance with Hand Hygiene – Audit Report, the first published in Scotland, is released. The reduction of Healthcare Associated Infection (HAI) is an important issue for NHSScotland. The Scottish Government is leading on this issue and has supported the HAI Taskforce in its delivery of a co-ordinated approach to reducing HAI. Health Protection Scotland (HPS), a division of NHS National Services Scotland, is a key contributor to this work.

One of the identified initiatives has involved NHSScotland Boards auditing compliance with hand hygiene using a tool developed by HPS. Compliance was monitored during two set periods in February and September 2007.

The Report shows positive results of 68% compliance during the first audit period, with a rise to 79% during the second period. The report is part of the Scottish Government's Hand Hygiene Campaign which aims to reduce avoidable illness amongst NHS patients and staff.

The results, submitted by all NHS Boards to Health Protection Scotland, provide an excellent first step in understanding compliance throughout the country, and reinforces the need to comply with hand hygiene, the single most important factor in reducing and preventing avoidable illnesses.



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The report gives details of compliance by NHS Board and by staff group and shows that many staff are continuously working towards achieving the best possible standards of care and that results compare favourably to those published around the world on hand hygiene compliance.

Claire Kilpatrick, Nurse Consultant Infection Control, Health Protection Scotland commented, “The increase between the 1st and 2nd overall audit results was statistically significant which is a considerable achievement to date (68-79%). We are just starting to seriously address compliance as a country and overall it is already getting better. Many staff are working towards achieving the highest possible standards to reduce the spread of infections through good hand hygiene.”

To support achieving the Scottish Government target of 90% compliance by November 2008, these first results will be followed by further audits in NHS Boards in February 2008, with results then published by Health Protection Scotland.

This next phase of work will continue to allow individual NHS Boards to compare data from previously recorded results, to enable monitoring and comparing of trends within Boards and give up to date performance information.

The report also includes further work planned in supporting the ongoing improvement of hand hygiene throughout NHS Boards, which includes the move to quarterly reports being published by HPS to track the progress of compliance in order to meet the Scottish Government target.

Full details of the first audit results are available at:

<http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/haic/ic/nationalhandhygienecampaign.aspx>

Notes to Editor

The Scottish Government Health Directorate Healthcare Associated Infection Task Force requested that a Hand Hygiene Campaign be rolled out across NHS Scotland. Health Protection Scotland was asked to lead on this work and there was a requirement that NHS Boards would take part in Campaign activities.

All operational NHS Boards as well as two special NHS Boards in Scotland have taken part in monitoring staff compliance with hand hygiene, utilising an audit tool and complimentary protocol produced to support a standardised approach in Scotland. Boards have submitted results on hand hygiene compliance audits to Health Protection Scotland (HPS) following two mandatory audit periods in 2007.

It is well recognised that hand hygiene is the single most important factor in reducing and preventing avoidable illnesses, e.g. healthcare associated infections. All staff within healthcare settings in particular must recognise this and perform hand hygiene effectively and in a timely fashion^{1,2}. Audit is one of a number of effective approaches identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in ensuring compliance with hand hygiene in healthcare settings¹.

WHO clearly summarises that there are many factors that influence adherence to hand hygiene compliance, including skin irritation, lack of supplies, time pressures. In addition, sustainability over time can also be an on-going challenge¹. Among other initiatives, supply of hand hygiene solutions has been addressed in Scotland³

Other elements of the Campaign have also aimed to promote sustainable improvements in hand hygiene.

This report shows that many staff are working hard towards trying to achieve the best possible standards in relation to hand hygiene and is a great first step in understanding hand hygiene compliance across a country.

Performing hand hygiene at the most important times will be a continued focus for healthcare staff in NHS Scotland. There are 5 moments that are crucial, which are before patient contact, before an aseptic task, after body fluid exposure risk, after patient contact and after contact with patient surroundings. Audits will continue to help NHS Boards to understand when opportunities for hand hygiene are taken based on these 5 moments.

This is the first Scottish report on hand hygiene compliance for NHSScotland and is the first report to present compliance data at a country level. This is an excellent first step in understanding hand hygiene practices throughout staff groups working in the NHS.”

Studies around the world have shown that people do not always wash their hands as often as they should and that many factors influence hand hygiene practices. Hand hygiene is considered to be the single most important way to stop the spread of germs and this information provides a basis for which to encourage all staff to improve and maintain their compliance with hand hygiene, particularly at the most important times when patients are being cared for”.

NHS Boards and HPS will be continuing to support the improvement of hand hygiene practices throughout NHSScotland throughout 2008.

References:

1. WHO. WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care (Advanced Draft), World Alliance for Patient Safety. 2006:WHO, Geneva.
2. Larson EL. APIC guideline for handwashing and hand antisepsis in health care settings. *American Journal of Infection Control* 1995;23(4):251-69.
3. SEHD. CNO (2005) 1 Alcohol Based Handrubs and Infection Control. 2005:SEHD, Edinburgh.

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**Further Information on Hand Hygiene**

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