



Hand Hygiene Compliance Among Visitors to Acute Health Care Settings: A Systematic Review

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Purpose/Hypothesis: Hospital acquired infections (HAI) are widely acknowledged as an important public health issue. Hand hygiene (HHg) guidelines for health care workers are common, but remain uncommon for visitors from the community even though pathogen transmission from the community could be a source of HAI. The purpose of this systematic review was to assess adherence to HHg guidelines among visitors from the community to inpatient acute health care settings.

Number of Subjects: 42 articles were screened according to eligibility criteria, and 8 cohort studies were included in a narrative literature synthesis.

Materials/Methods: A systematic literature search for hand washing among visitors in a hospital setting was conducted using the databases Academic Search Complete, CINAHL, Cochrane Library, Medline, and PubMed. Primary or secondary research studies that were published in peer-reviewed journals, written in English, and involving hospital visitor HHg compliance was included in this review. A modified version of the Downs and Black (mD&B) checklist was used to document the methodological quality of included studies.

Results: Included studies were low quality (mD&B score range: 11-19/26). Study results were synthesized narratively due to lack of homogeneity across studies. Settings included main hospital entrances, medical/surgical units, and intensive care units. Baseline HHg compliance was 0.5-11% at the main entrance, 9-35% of visitors to general and surgical units, and 7-94% for visitors to an intensive care unit. Posted signs, de-germer dispensers, and pandemic influenza status all increased HHg compliance.

Conclusions: Visitor compliance with HHg guidelines is highly variable but may be amenable to public health interventions. Higher quality studies are necessary to generate best practice recommendations related to HHg in hospital visitors.

Clinical Relevance: The hospital interprofessional team has a responsibility to reduce HAI. This study contributes to acute care physical therapists' efforts to educate the lay public about the importance of HHg.