

POSTER PRESENTATION

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Lessons in hand washing: what we should know?

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Introduction

Most communicable diseases are transmitted by hand; from nosocomial to community acquired diseases. Consequently, hand washing is strictly advocated in hospital, eateries and public places where contact by hand is frequent.

Objectives

The effect of hand washing in reducing the microbial load of the hand in line with specified hand washing guidelines was determined.

Methods

Two categories of volunteers, supervised and un-supervised hand washing were studied and percentage of subjects in each category showing microbial reduction by 50%, 80% and 99% was recorded. Swab samples were collected with moistened swabs before and after hand washing. Samples were cultured and assessed qualitative and quantitative.

Results

Supervised washed hands yielded 93, 75 and 38 percent reduction of microbial load by 50%, 80% and 99% respectively contrast reduction by similar proportion by 68, 15, and 7 percent in the un-supervised washed hands. The difference in reduction of bacterial load in supervised and unsupervised groups was significant ($p > 0.01$). An increase in bacterial load was seen after hand washing in 18-26% of volunteers with higher extreme occurring in unsupervised hand wash. Bacterial that persisted or increased in number following hand washing were *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Klebsiella*, spp, *Enterobacter* spp and *Escherichia coli*. There was no gender preference but, persons with long nails yielded more microbiota in type and population.

Conclusion

Adequate hand washing and the use of germicidal soap may represent the rule in preventing transmission of diseases communicable by hand.

Disclosure of interest

None declared.

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