



Book Review

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Practical approaches to hospital infection prevention and control

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Hospital acquired infections (HAIs) increase the duration of hospital stay, often require more aggressive and prolonged treatment and a greater expense is incurred by the patient or the healthcare system. I feel HAI may also go against the basic principles of human justice. Patients get admitted to hospitals expecting to get well again and not to acquire more serious and dangerous diseases.

Hospital infection control is an important issue all over the world. I am a member of the infection control committee (ICC) and of the medicine and therapeutics committee (MTC) in my institution and am involved in developing greater cooperation between these two important committees. In developing nations this is often lacking. Recently the first global forum on bacterial infections was held in New Delhi, India. The Public Health Foundation of India (www.phfi.org), one of the organisers of the forum has recently published a handbook titled *Practical approaches to hospital infection prevention and control*.

The prologue states the handbook has been produced to help in implementing infection control policies in hospitals and public health facilities. The book is a compilation of various resources available in the public domain. The handbook has 10 chapters and each chapter begins with a lesson outline (lesson plan) which can help an instructor conduct training sessions using the handbook. The book begins with core components of an infection prevention and control programme. The concept of an infection control medical officer described in this chapter was a new one for me. Many hospitals do not have an infectious disease specialist and the issue of infection control does not receive the importance it deserves. I felt the role of a pharmacist/pharmacologist in the ICC was not highlighted. Improper use of antibiotics is an important factor influencing the development and spread of HAI and close coordination and cooperation between ICC and MTC is required to address this issue. The chapter on hand washing and hand hygiene is important and the world hand washing day highlights this issue. The problem is that in most hospital wards in developing nations, facilities for hand washing for health personnel, patients and patient attendants

are often not easily available. Also wards are crowded with inadequate ventilation predisposing to the spread of infection.

The concept of universal standard precautions is also difficult in certain situations. The chapter on surgical site infections (SSI) classifies surgeries as clean, clean-contaminated, contaminated and dirty or infected. The diagrammatic representation of surgical hand asepsis will be useful. The drawback is surgical antibiotic prophylaxis (SAP) is not covered and there are major lacunae in this area in developing countries. Improper SAP can contribute to resistant organisms and other problems. The chapter on antibiotic policy provides basic guidelines to initiate this fundamental step. Creation of an antibiotic policy is often difficult and involves bringing together a wide range of individuals with radically differing perceptions.

The chapter on injection safety has been well written and provides useful information in this important area. The chapter on biomedical waste management provides useful guidelines but more information may be needed. Hospital biomedical waste is hazardous and instances of improper disposal have been highlighted in the media. The infection control assessment toolkit provided in the appendix is the best part of the handbook according to this reviewer and it provides a practical checklist for the ICC to assess the infection control status of their hospital and for external monitors to assess hospitals and other health facilities.

The quality of a few diagrams and pictures could be improved but in many instances URLs to access the original resources are provided. The handbook has been compiled from a variety of sources and in certain instances the text does not flow smoothly. The handbook can serve as a useful introduction to this important topic for an interested reader. The book has been well produced and designed. Information on how and where to obtain copies of the handbook would be useful.

About the book: Public Health Foundation of India. *Practical approaches to hospital infection prevention and control*. New Delhi, India: 2011.

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