

Antibacterial wipes can spread superbugs: study

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By Michael Kahn

LONDON (Reuters) - Disinfectant wipes routinely used in hospitals may actually spread drug-resistant bacteria rather than kill the dangerous infections, British researchers said on Tuesday.

While the wipes killed some bacteria, a study of two hospitals showed they did not get them all and could transfer the so-called superbugs to other surfaces, Gareth Williams, a microbiologist at Cardiff University, said.

The findings presented at the American Society of Microbiology's General Meeting in Boston focused on bacteria that included methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA.

"What we have found is there is a high risk," Williams, who led the study, said by telephone. "We need to give guidance to the staff on how to use the wipes because we found there is a possibility of cross transfer."

MRSA infections can range from boils to more severe infections of the bloodstream, lungs and surgical sites. Most cases are associated with hospitals, nursing homes or other health care facilities.

The superbug can cause life-threatening and disfiguring infections and can often only be treated with expensive, intravenous antibiotics.

Experts have been saying for years that poor hospital practices spread dangerous bacteria, and yet many studies have shown that health care workers, including doctors and nurses, often fail to even wash their hands as directed.

The findings from a study of intensive care units at two Welsh hospitals suggest that even cleaning with antimicrobial wipes may not be enough depending on how staff use them.

The researchers found that many health care workers cleaned multiple surfaces near patients, such as bed rails, monitors and tables with a single wipe and risked sweeping the infections around rather than cleaning them up.

"We found that the most effective way to prevent the risk of MRSA spread in hospital wards is to ensure the wipe is used only once on one surface," Williams said.

Gabriel Comment: Just wash a surface clean with a free-rinsing cold water detergent such as Gabriel Fast-1-2-3... It works very well... As long as your washing solution is changed as needed and the wiping cloth is changed when wet to the point where it can no longer absorb water.

(Editing by Maggie Fox)

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