



Singapore Healthcare
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Using Communications to Improve Hand Hygiene

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Introduction

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is endemic in Singapore hospitals. Colonisation with MRSA is a risk factor for subsequent clinical infection. At NUH, 9% of all patients admitted carry MRSA making the risk of in hospital transmission very significant. Of additional concern is the transmission of Vancomycin resistant enterococci and emerging gram negative multi drug resistant bacteria in healthcare institutions.

An MRSA taskforce was formed and adopted a bundle of measures to improve infection control and patient safety. This included hospital-wide active surveillance, robust auditing systems, isolation and cohorting of MRSA patients and a hand hygiene compliance programme.

The NUH Corporate Communications team was recruited in 2009 and has been working closely with the Infection Control and Infectious Diseases team to raise awareness of the importance of hand hygiene among staff, patients and visitors. Hand hygiene is an important practice for healthcare providers and has a significant impact on reducing the spread of infections in hospitals. Effective hand hygiene practices play a key role in improving patient safety.

The communications efforts are the focus of this presentation.

Objectives

To improve the rate of hand hygiene compliance through:

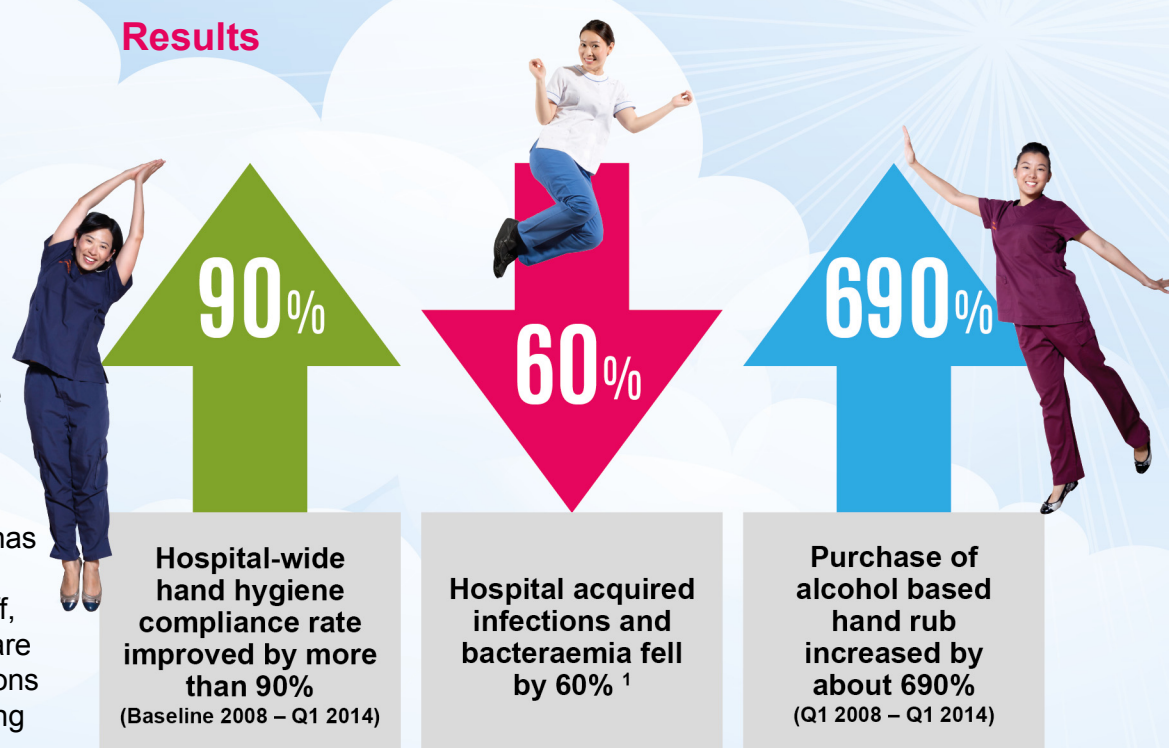
- Creating interesting and eye-catching publicity to capture attention
- Organising fun and relevant activities for staff to promote awareness
- Tapping on traditional and social media to reach out to a wider audience

Methodology

Since 2009, NUH has celebrated the annual International Hand Hygiene Day on May 5, in conjunction with the WHO's SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands campaign. Some of these publicity efforts over the years included:

- Specially customised NUH hand mascot
- A 13-metre long poster on the hospital facade which was visible from the major roads
- Lift stickers profiling Hand Hygiene Ambassadors from all levels of staff
- A series of hand hygiene posters
- A hand hygiene video that featured stories of real patients and a caregiver on how they have been affected by MRSA
- A 4.5-metre by 2.7-metre wall collage which was made up of more than 2000 staff photos performing hand hygiene
- Four sets of comics illustration with different hand hygiene themes were distributed to all inpatients
- A 'poster - feature wall' that measured 21 metre along NUH's busiest thoroughfare
- Display of a replica of a patient's bed showing areas where germs are present, at the main gateway of the hospital
- Various staff competitions - drawing, video and photography that attracted high number of entries
- Media coverage since 2010 on the annual hand hygiene activities

Results



For its efforts and results, the team was also awarded the National Clinical Excellence Team Award 2013.

Conclusion

Using various communication platforms - both internal and external, we have impressed upon the hospital staff the importance of hand hygiene and how clean hands can save lives. It complements the efforts by the Infection Control and Infectious Diseases team where prevention of MRSA acquisition and infection are now embedded in the culture of clinical medicine at NUH.

Continuous efforts are key to ensuring that the risks of infections for our patients are kept low.

Reference

1. Sustained MRSA control in a hyper-endemic tertiary acute care hospital with infrastructure challenges in Singapore. DA Fisher, PA Tambyah, R Lin, R Jureen, AR Cook, A Lim, B Ong, M Balm, TM Ng, LY Hsu. J Hosp Infect; 85 (2013) 141-1489

