



Gaps on hand hygiene implementation in 13 public hospitals in Sierra Leone

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Key Messages

- Hand Hygiene practice and promotion in public hospitals of Sierra Leone are suboptimal
- Improving hand hygiene will prevent the spread of infections in hospitals in Sierra Leone.
- We must act now to prioritize hand hygiene activities in order to prevent the spread of infections in our hospitals

What is the problem and why is it important?

- We are losing people because they acquire infections in the very places they should be healed.
- When people acquire these infections, they stay longer in hospitals and incur more costs to service their care
- Suboptimal hand hygiene practices are the major reason for all this
- Despite this, there was no previous assessment of the hand hygiene framework in Sierra Leone
- Therefore, information on hand hygiene is needed to guide strategies to prevent the spread of infections in health facilities.

How did we measure it?

- We assessed hand hygiene practices across 13 public hospitals of the Western Area of Sierra Leone
- In May 2021
- Using a World Health Organization (WHO) observational tool
- To collect information from the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) focal persons

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- None of the hospitals had a dedicated hand hygiene budget, realistic plan to improve hand hygiene infrastructure or systematic audit of the presence of hand hygiene resources
 - Regular ward audits of hand hygiene resources were conducted at only two hospitals
 - A formalized patient engagement program was available in only three hospitals
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Implications

- Our result shows that we can do something to prevent unnecessary deaths and excess costs incurred by patients in our hospitals if we improve hand hygiene practices
- If we fail to act now, we will disturb the implementation of hand hygiene activities and will not be able to properly manage our hand hygiene resources
- Recommendations:
 - I. In the short term-we need to put systems in place to engage all stakeholders to prioritise hand hygiene
 - II. In the long term - we need to have a costed plan with the required resources set aside to support:
 - The establishment of a formalized patient engagement system.
 - The introduction of an audit system for hand hygiene resources in hospitals of Sierra Leone