



Infection Prevention and Control in 3 Tertiary Health Care Facilities in Freetown, Sierra Leone during the COVID-19 pandemic: More Needs to Be Done!

¹Reference:

Kamara IF, Kumar AMV, Maruta A, Fofanah BD, Njuguna CK, Shongwe S, Moses F, Tengbe SM, Kanu JS, Lakoh S, Mansaray AHD, Selvaraj K, Khogali M, Zachariah R. Antibiotic Use in Suspected and Confirmed COVID-19 Patients Admitted to Health Facilities in Sierra Leone in 2020-2021: Practice Does Not Follow Policy. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2022 Mar 28;19(7):4005. doi: 10.3390/ijerph19074005. PMID: 35409687; PMCID: PMC8998021
e-mail: ikamara@who.int

Key Messages

- In an operational research study involving three tertiary healthcare facilities in Freetown, Sierra Leone (2020-21), the level of Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) implementation was graded as basic and suboptimal according to the World Health Organization Infection Prevention and Control Assessment Framework (IPCAF) tool grading system.
- There is thus an urgent need for both financial and technical support to address the gaps and challenges identified including IPC orientation training for all healthcare workers and administrative staff, provision of personal protective equipment, continued monitoring of IPC practices, and the development of a national strategy to undertake regular surveillance of HAI.

What is the problem and why is it important?

- In response to the COVID -19 pandemic, healthcare facilities worldwide have stepped up their IPC efforts.
- IPC measures help in reducing the spread of infections in hospitals, including those caused by resistant microbes, and promote health worker and patient safety.
- The use of the standardized WHO tool enables the monitoring of progress and identifies areas for improvement.
- Hence, an operational research study was conducted to assess the level of IPC implementation and identify strengths and challenges in the hospital IPC programs in Sierra Leone.

How did we measure it?

- We conducted a hospital-based cross-sectional study at three tertiary hospitals in Freetown, Sierra Leone.
- Data was collected in August 2021 using the WHO IPCAF tool
- The WHO IPCAF tool is divided into eight sections, which reflect the eight core components of IPC Programs.
- These components include: IPC program; IPC guidelines; IPC education and training; HAI surveillance; Multimodal strategies;

The WHO IPCAF Tool is a standardized tool that is used for routine monitoring of the implementation of the eighth Core Component of IPC at healthcare facilities

Monitoring/Audit of IPC practice; Workload, staffing and bed occupancy; Built environment, materials and equipment.

What did we find?

- Out of a maximum of 800 points, IPC compliance scores were 333.5 for Connaught Hospital, 323.5 for Ola During Children's Hospital, and 296 for Princess Christian Maternity Hospital.
- These equate to a 'Basic' level of compliance indicating suboptimal implementation of IPC measures
- Out of the eight core components, IPC programs were the best performing and the least performing were healthcare-associated infection surveillance
- Other implementation challenges included (i) lack of clean, safe, and uninterrupted water supply (ii) inadequate IPC supplies such as personal protective equipment, hand hygiene stations, and cleaning agents (iii) lack of a dedicated IPC budget for implementation of IPC activities including training of newly posted staff.

Implications and Recommendations

- The IPC programs at tertiary hospitals in Freetown are sub-optimal.
- This has the potential to increase the burden of HAI and AMR in these hospitals.
- An effective IPC program is essential for achieving universal health coverage and sustainable development goals by 2030.
- We therefore recommend:
 - Hospital IPC teams to conduct new employee orientation and training for all healthcare workers and administrative staff ensuring adequate supplies of safe water and personal protective equipment.
 - National IPC unit should develop a national HAI surveillance strategy and ensure regular HAI surveillance.
 - Routine monitoring of IPC practices using the WHO IPCAF Tool.
 - Government of Sierra Leone and its partners should provide technical and financial support to the national and hospital IPC team for the implementation of IPC programs to reduce the burden of healthcare-associated infections and antimicrobial resistance.