

Nosocomial Infections: A Major Global Safety Concern

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Background

Nosocomial infections, or Hospital Acquired Infections (HAI), are a major global safety concern for both patients and healthcare professionals. Despite progress in public health and hospital care, infections continue to develop in hospitalized patients, and may also affect hospital staff.

Aims & Objectives

To assess the impact of nosocomial infections in a hospital setting.

Materials & Methods

Retrospective study from the review of literature and data analysis.

Results

The burden of HAI is substantial in developed countries, where it affects from 5% to 15% of hospitalized patients in regular wards and as many as 50% or more of patients in intensive care units. In developing countries, the magnitude of the problem remains underestimated or even unknown largely because diagnosis of hospital acquired infection is complex and surveillance activities to guide interventions require expertise and resources. The high rate of hospital acquired infections has resulted in 12-80% mortality rates associated with nosocomial

infections due to device-related infections, increase in the length of stay to two and a half times longer than uninfected patients, and increase in the socio-economic costs due to HAI: direct medical costs; indirect costs related to lost wages, diminished worker productivity on the job, short term and long term morbidity, mortality, income lost by family members, forgone leisure time and time spent by family/friends for hospital visits, travel costs, home care; and intangible costs related to diminished quality of life. It is observed that while the increase in the overall annual direct cost to hospitals due to HAI range from \$35.7 billion to \$45 billion (CDC data of US hospitals), the benefits of prevention due to effectiveness of possible infection control interventions range from \$25.0 to \$31.5 billion for inpatient hospital service. Also, apart from the high annual costs due to HAI, the hospital also loses its reputation and credibility along with demoralization of the caregivers.

Conclusions

Perhaps the most effective technique for controlling nosocomial infections is to strategically implement Quality Assurance and Quality Control measures to the healthcare sectors, and evidence-based management can be a feasible approach. Conclusively, assessing the impact of hospital acquired infections in the healthcare setting can greatly help improve the quality of healthcare for patients and focus on means of implementing preventive measures to reduce these types of infections and help prevent getting a bad name to the hospital.