

## **Champion Handwasher Hospital Campaign: Reducing HAIs to nearly ZERO**

I believe if we begin to use the 4 Principles of Hand Awareness as the primary prevention method for HAIs and as a methodology to help initiate the “culture of safety” in every hospital, we would see an influx of compliance in hand hygiene and respiratory guidelines. This will benefit both Patient Safety and Infection Control initiatives creating better patient care. Hand Awareness (hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette), if strictly practiced by ALL HCW’s, would reduce HAIs to nearly zero, no denominator would be necessary. The REAL challenge is how to change human behavior in a time-sensitive, chaotic environment and teach HCWs and others to pay closer attention to their own hand awareness at all times.

One answer is the Champion Handwasher Hospital Campaign that accompanies these 4 Principles and places an emphasis on “genuine communication” across levels of authority (patients, clerks, aids, nurses and physicians) around the hospital. Promoting Hand Awareness during specific weeks (Patient Safety Awareness Week, Infection Control Week, and National Handwashing Awareness Week) of the year will initiate this “culture of safety”.

The 4 Principles of Hand Awareness, which have been endorsed by the AMA and the AAFP, are the crux of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. If every HCW practiced carefully then HAIs would drop off precipitously. While there are many good policies in place that address specific circumstances, none truly teach the HCW how to think “on their feet”, which is a common circumstance in this increasingly complicated hospital health delivery system especially with the advent of technology and increased mobility of the sick patient. This will ensure the HCW will be more aware of their hands and improve the chances of NOT committing “contamination”, be it of their self or patients.

This campaign addresses two key components of HAI: It empowers the least skilled or educated HCW to communicate a basic, but critical, behavior of Hand Awareness associated with HAIs across levels of authority, to reinforce that WE are all on the same TEAM when it comes to patient care (safety). Another hurdle to the emphasis on teamwork and CREW Resource management is to breakdown every HCW’s first 12 years of education that taught us “to do what you are told” and “do not question authority”. This simple Campaign is a great opportunity to benefit patient care and reduce HAI!

The 4 Principles of Hand Awareness:

1. Wash your hands when they are dirty and before eating.
2. Do not cough into your hands.
3. Do not sneeze into your hands.
4. Above all, do not put your fingers into your eyes, nose or mouth.

Now is the time to begin to leverage all of the HCW team to begin a more comprehensive approach to help modify human behavior to reduce HAI.

Any other thoughts on this matter?

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