

# ISHE ISSUES 5.12.10

---



**OVER 1.7 MILLION HOSPITAL-ACQUIRED INFECTIONS ANNUALLY.  
99,000 DEATHS FROM HOSPITAL-ACQUIRED INFECTIONS ANNUALLY.\***

# REDUCING HOSPITAL-ACQUIRED INFECTIONS THROUGH BETTER HAND HYGIENE

*Over 1.7 million hospital-acquired infections annually.  
99,000 deaths from hospital-acquired infections annually.\**



## The Source of the Problem

Caregivers, visitors and other hospital staff are not practicing the hand hygiene that is required to prevent these infections. Additionally, hospitals are concerned about the effect and increase in hospital-acquired infections may have in the future on their reimbursement and on their accreditation.

## What is Hand Hygiene?

Hand hygiene is a term being used across the health care industry and broadly refers to all types of hand cleansing from alcohol-based hand sanitizers to fullfledged handwashing. Hospitals have always required handwashing prior to and following patient care, but the rise of hospital-acquired infections, like MRSA, and infections in general, like H1N1, have highlighted the need to re-train and re-focus on hand hygiene.

## Manual Monitoring and Tracking

Many hospitals have not had a hand hygiene protocol in place at all and are realizing the need for a protocol and the challenges associated with monitoring and driving continuous improvement. Hospitals that already have hand hygiene protocols in place are hiring full-time employees to openly or secretly monitor staff and their hand hygiene compliance. While the Joint Commission does not require regular reporting of hand hygiene compliance, they have the option of requesting proof of the existence of a hand hygiene protocol and reports that demonstrate continuous improvement measures against that protocol.

This type of solution is the typical choice for the hospital who needs a stand-alone solution that meets the most basic hand hygiene protocol requirements.

## A Simple Solution

The most basic electronic hand hygiene compliance solution should consist of:

- monitor hospital staff locations
- identify when a staff member washes his or her hands
- track hand hygiene events electronically 24/7
- provide hand hygiene reports

Several electronic hand hygiene solutions on the market today use real-time locating solutions to locate staff at hand hygiene stations and document these events in

reports that can be accessed via any computer on the hospital network.

An electronic solution is the right choice for the hospital who needs a standalone solution that meets the most basic hand hygiene protocol requirements.

Manual methods of monitoring and tracking are limited because they typically do not cover all caregivers and all shifts. Using employees for monitoring and tracking is costly and allows for human errors in documentation.\*\*

---

## Advanced Solutions

There are multiple vendors on the market who can provide hospitals with an electronic hand hygiene solution. When identifying the most appropriate solution for a hospital, clinical and IT managers should consider the following:

### How will the solution work for one unit, a hospital, or multiple hospitals in a health system?

IT and BioMed managers are responsible for multiple distinct systems across the hospital. A hand hygiene solution should integrate with other systems – like nurse communications, wireless devices, locating systems and enterprise-wide reporting.

### How do I use reports to drive continuous improvement?

Reporting should be enterprise-wide and allow hospital management to run hand hygiene reports for the hospital as a whole and also provide the option to drill down to specific staff or specific units to determine detail behind non-compliance.

### How will an electronic solution drive behavior changes across my hospital?

Reports can show historical information about hand hygiene compliance. What reports cannot do is provide

immediate feedback to caregivers that drive behavior changes. When integrated with wireless devices and locating systems, caregivers can be proactively alerted to missed hand hygiene opportunities.

For example, if a caregiver enters a patient room without visiting a hand hygiene station, some solution providers can alert the caregiver to the missed opportunity via a vibrating staff badge, audio notification from a staff badge, and text messages to caregivers via wireless phones. This proactive alerting provides caregivers with the opportunity to immediately address the problem and reduce the spread of hospital-acquired infections. Lights on staff badges can be illuminated (green or red) to indicate compliance or non-compliance and some hospitals are encouraging patients to speak up when they see non-compliance on the part of their caregivers.

### How do you leverage a handwashing solution for other purposes?

Ideally, a handwashing solution should be able to do more than just handwashing – or at a minimum, be designed to expand and integrate with other parts of the hospital and the clinical workflow. Many of the solutions on the market today utilize real-time locating technology to achieve hand hygiene monitoring and tracking. When investigating handwashing solutions, look for solutions that will build on this same infrastructure and investment to expand to broader staff locating, staff-to-staff communication, patient locating, asset tracking and temperature monitoring. Invest in a solution today that you can leverage more broadly tomorrow.



Enhancing Outcomes for Patients and Their Caregivers.™

\* CDC, March 2009: "The Direct Medical Costs of Healthcare-Associated Infections in U.S. Hospitals and the Benefits of Prevention"

\*\* CDC Publication, March-April 2007: "Estimating Health Care-Associated Infections and Deaths in U.S. in 2002"



INDIANA SOCIETY FOR HEALTHCARE ENGINEERING  
P.O. Box 40727  
Indianapolis, IN 46240-0727

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE FEATURED IN ISHE PUBLICATIONS?

If you would like to contribute an article and photos to the next issue of ISHE Issues,  
please contact Steve Thurston at [steve.thurston@escocommunications.com](mailto:steve.thurston@escocommunications.com).