



## 2015 Infection Control November Newsletter # 10

### **Can Alcohol Based Handrub (ABHR) be used prior to Surgery?**

#### **1. What does Hand Hygiene Australia say?**

ABHR is the hand hygiene product of choice for all standard aseptic non-touch technique (ANTT) procedures. Surgical scrub is required for surgical ANTT. For definitions on standard vs. surgical ANTT see Section 1.7.3 of the 2010 Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infections in Healthcare. For use prior to surgery, the product must be labelled as suitable for this.

#### **What does the National Guide define as surgery (regardless of where it is performed)**

*(B1.7.3 Surgical or Standard ANTT?)*

*Differentiation between Standard and Surgical ANTT is intended to provide clarity and structure to aid understanding, but not polarise practice. ANTT guidelines help standardise practice, technique and equipment levels.*

- *Standard ANTT—Clinical procedures managed with Standard ANTT will characteristically be technically simple, short in duration (approximately less than 20 minutes), and involve relatively few and small key sites and key parts. Standard ANTT requires a main general aseptic field and non-sterile gloves. The use of critical micro aseptic fields and a non-touch technique is essential to protect key parts and key sites.*
- *Surgical ANTT—Surgical ANTT is demanded when procedures are technically complex, involve extended periods of time, large open key sites or large or numerous key parts. To counter these risks, a main critical aseptic field and sterile gloves are required and often full barrier precautions (Pratt et al, 2007). Surgical ANTT should still utilise critical micro aseptic fields and non-touch technique where practical to do so.*

#### **2. What do the manufacturers say?**

There is one product in current use that provides a method for use for surgical hand disinfection - *The hands are first washed with a non medicated soap, paying attention to the area under the nails by using a nail pick or brush. The hands are then dried. The 70% isopropyl alcohol product is then applied in 5ml lots so that the hands are kept wet for 3 minutes.*

**As of November 2015, I am unable to find any updates on Hand Hygiene Australia website that supports use of ABHR for surgery in Australia using the accepted definition of surgery.**

#### **3. What is the affect of ABHR vs an antiseptic wash?**

There is a good body of evidence that demonstrates that ABHR is in fact superior to a 4% chlorhexidene wash in reducing the numbers of skin flora and transient bacteria

#### **4. What are the issues preventing more widespread use pre surgery?**

Because alcohol is flammable, the user must ensure all alcohol has evaporated before proceeding to the next task. The use of diathermy or laser must be taken into consideration.

#### References

- Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare. (2010). National Health and Medical Research Council. Commonwealth of Australia. Download at: [www.nhmrc.gov.au/node/30290](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/node/30290)
- Infection Prevention and Control Standards for general practices and other office-based and community-based practices. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. RACGP (2014)
- Hand Hygiene Australia website: [www.hha.org.au/](http://www.hha.org.au/)

see previous October e newsletter for correct use of ABHR and navigating your way through skin problems