



Summary brief

May 2022

Gaps in hand hygiene implementation in 13 public hospitals in Sierra Leone

Reference:

Lakoh. S., Maruta A., Kallon C., et al. How well are hand hygiene practices and promotion implemented in Sierra Leone? A cross-sectional study in 13 public hospitals. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2022, 19(7), 3787
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Key Messages

- Hand Hygiene practice and promotion in public hospitals of Sierra Leone are suboptimal.
- Improving hand hygiene will prevent the spread of infections in hospitals in Sierra Leone.
- We must act now to prioritize hand hygiene activities in order to prevent the spread of infections in our hospitals.

What is the problem and why is it important?

- We are losing people because they acquire infections in the very places where they should be healed.
- When people acquire infections, they stay longer in hospitals and incur more costs to service their care.
- Suboptimal hand hygiene practices are the major reason for all of these problems.
- Despite this, there has been no previous assessment of hand hygiene practices using the hand hygiene framework in Sierra Leone.
- Better information on hand hygiene is needed to guide strategies to prevent the spread of infections in health facilities.

How did we measure it?

- We assessed hand hygiene practices across 13 public hospitals of the Western Area of Sierra Leone in May 2021.
- We used a World Health Organization (WHO) observational tool.
- We collected information from the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) focal persons.

What did we find?

- None of the hospitals had a dedicated hand hygiene budget, a realistic plan to improve hand hygiene infrastructure or a systematic audit of the presence of hand hygiene resources.
 - Regular ward audits of hand hygiene resources were conducted at only two of the 13 hospitals.
 - A formalized patient engagement program was available in only three of the 13 hospitals.
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Implications

- Our results show that we can do something to prevent unnecessary deaths and excess costs incurred by patients in our hospitals if we improve hand hygiene practices.
- If we fail to act now, we will adversely affect the implementation of hand hygiene activities and will not be able to properly manage our hand hygiene resources.
- Recommendations for action:
 - I. In the short term-we need to put systems in place to engage all stakeholders to prioritise hand hygiene.
 - II. In the long term - we need to have a costed plan with the required resources set aside to support:
 - The establishment of a formalized patient engagement programme
 - The introduction of an audit system for hand hygiene resources in hospitals of Sierra Leone.