

New training manual emphasises importance of cleaning to fight infection in healthcare facilities

One of the simplest methods of preventing infection is proper cleaning practices; however, a lack of quality training is often one of the factors contributing to the high infection rate in South Africa's healthcare facilities.



“Proper training and implementing correct cleaning practices is one of the easiest ways to prevent infections. The lack of training and adherence to correct practices pose a big risk, something which can lead to causing real harm,” says Emma Corder, managing director of industrial and healthcare cleaning solutions provider, Industroclean.

To be effective, environmental cleaning activities must be implemented within the framework of an infection prevention control programme.

With this in mind, Industroclean identified the need for a comprehensive document focusing on the standard operating procedures for cleaning in healthcare facilities, specifically on the methodologies of cleaning.

A training manual was developed in partnership with MS Consulting, a consultancy with experience in training, cleaning and the undertaking of audits in healthcare facilities. It was launched during a webinar hosted by Industroclean on Tuesday, 4 May 2021.

The manual is easy to use and understand and focuses on the link between infection control and environmental cleaning in healthcare facilities. It includes hand washing posters which were updated according to WHO guidelines and basic cleaning principles, and the prevention of cross-contamination is in line with the Centres for Disease Control's guidelines for cleaning in healthcare facilities.

With the outbreak of Covid-19 in South Africa last year, the rate of infection specifically in hospitals was surprising, forcing health authorities to close at least one hospital.

An investigation into one of these outbreaks in a healthcare facility, found that it was caused when transmission occurred between a patient being assessed in the ER for Covid-19 and another patient in the same ward for a medical emergency.

Different risk areas in healthcare facilities, the routes of transmission and the chain of infection and how good cleaning practices and good hand hygiene can break the chain of transmission with good hygiene principles, are some of the topics in the document.

Infection prevention and control nursing practitioners were also consulted for input into the training manual.

"The manual is designed to assist with best practices to improve and standardise the implementation of cleaning methodologies in patient care areas," says Marietjie Swanepoel, owner of MS Consulting.

The document focuses further on improving standards of the housekeeping department and assisting professional healthcare cleaners. It also highlights the important role they play in creating a safe and clean environment for patients, healthcare staff and visitors, as well as to prevent environment contact transmissions.

"Maintaining the highest levels of hygiene is a rudimentary principle in the industry, and one that requires neither huge investment nor highly-skilled staff," says Corder.

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