

Nosocomial Infections in India: The Unaddressed Lacunae!

Harika Bheemavarapu^{1*}, Mohammad Arief², Akram Ahmad³, Isha Patel⁴

¹Department of Pharmaceutical analysis, Talla Padmavati College of Pharmacy, Warangal, Telangana INDIA.

²Department of Clinical Pharmacy, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, UCSI University, Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA.

³The University of Sydney School of Pharmacy, The University of Sydney, Sydney, AUSTRALIA.

⁴Department of Pharmacy Practice, Administration and Research, Marshall University School of Pharmacy, Huntington, WV, USA.

A study by the international nosocomial infection control consortium found that the rates of hospital-acquired infections in India were higher than the statistics provided by the CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention).^[1] Overcrowded hospitals with poor infrastructure, lack of basic hygiene, low healthcare professionals to patient ratio, inappropriate usage of invasive devices and antibiotics, and lack of regulation enforcement contributes to nosocomial infections-associated deaths in India. Recently, 290 children lost their lives in a tertiary referral hospital in Gorakhpur located in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.^[2] The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of India launched an anti-microbial resistance awareness campaign known as 'Red Line', which encouraged people to put a stop to usage of medicines marked with a redline (antibiotics) and lacking a valid prescription from a physician.^[3] In spite of awareness campaigns, the prevalence of nosocomial infections remains high in India. A recent study found 143 strains of *Acinetobacter* in a tertiary hospital in India, of which, 126 (88.1%) were extremely drug resistant.^[4]

The quality and consistency of surveillance data on healthcare associated infections is limited in India^[4]. The Indian government should come up with a national surveillance plan that regulates the hospitals throughout the country. Under the surveillance plan, a provision should be made to establish a national database that records patient information electronically. Proper functioning of the hospital infection control committees in hospitals nationwide is essential. This can be achieved by providing autonomy to these committees to function effectively. Initiatives by

the Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Center for Disease Control to provide accreditation to hospitals through the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals should be implemented at the national level^[5]. Health care providers can play a key role in infection control. Adherence to guidelines provided by the Indian Council of Medical Research should be strongly enforced for all government and private hospitals in India. Educating and vaccinating hospital staff are some other measures that can be implemented in hospitals that can aid infection control. Patients that come to hospitals for treatment, should be informed about the importance of timely reporting of hospital acquired infections. Health care professionals can partner up with hospital administrators to implement interventions that can minimize medication misadventure, control infection spread and enhance patient care.

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*Correspondence to:

Ms. Harika Bheemavarapu,
Email: hariikabhimavarapu@gmail.com

