Rates of Medical Errors and Inadequate Care Is Higher in Nursing Homes Than in Hospitals

While the high rates of medical errors that occur in hospitals is well known, a recent investigation by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) found an alarming number of adverse events in skilled nursing facilities – higher than in hospitals – due to treatment errors and poor care.

In a single month, an estimated 1,500-plus Medicare patients who had been admitted to a skilled nursing facility for treatment after hospitalization died as a result of medical errors and poor care, nearly 22,000 patients experienced at least one adverse event, and more than 11,000 patients suffered a temporary harm event, one that could be corrected, according to a study by HHS. Problems included hypoglycemia, medication-induced delirium and pressure ulcers.

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Banning the Handshake From the Health Care Setting

The handshake represents a deeply established social custom. In recent years, however, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of hands as vectors for infection, leading to formal recommendations and policies regarding hand hygiene in hospitals and other health care facilities. Such programs have been limited by variable compliance and efficacy. In an attempt to avoid contracting or spreading infection, many individuals have made their own efforts to avoid shaking hands in various settings but, in doing so, may face social, political, and even financial risks.

Banning the handshake from the health care environment may require further study to confirm and better describe the link between handshake-related transmission of pathogens and disease. Given the tremendous social and economic burden of hospital-acquired infections and antimicrobial resistance, and the variable success of current approaches to hand hygiene in the health care environment, it would be a mistake to dismiss, out of hand, such a promising, intuitive, and affordable ban.

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Deadly pathogen discovered at Ohio long-term care facility could spell trouble elsewhere, researchers warn

The infection initially was found in the foot wound of a 69-year-old diabetic resident. A type of drug resistant Pseudomonas aeruginosa discovered in an Ohio long-term care facility has killed one person and infected six others, according to clinician researchers. A dangerous genetic element of this pathogen might already have been spreading, and “surveillance is urgently needed,” the investigators announced.

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