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Hand hygiene for infection prevention: Key considerations for selecting appropriate hand antiseptics

The use of Alcohol Based Hand Rubs (ABHR) has become the international standard for proper hand hygiene in healthcare settings. Both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization recommend them as the primary means of hand hygiene when hands are not visibly soiled. Selecting an appropriate antiseptic hand rub is an important decision because the clinical effectiveness of ABHR in reducing healthcare associated infection (HAI) is a result of several components including product formulation, antimicrobial efficacy, and hand hygiene compliance by health care workers (HCW). ABHR are complex formulations, combining ethyl alcohol with other ingredients to create specific attributes including antimicrobial efficacy, skin tolerance, and aesthetic properties. These contribute to the end-user experience and acceptance of the product, leading to either improvements in or impediments to hand hygiene compliance in health care facilities. Among HCWs, there are misconceptions about the effect ABHR may have on the skin with many believing that ABHR is harsher than soap and water. Understanding the differences these products have on the skin can help HCWs change their hand hygiene practices and break the cycle of skin damage. Hand hygiene compliance is perhaps the most critical component to achieving clinical effectiveness. Therefore, the most effective ABHR ensure maximum compliance to hand hygiene practices by balancing antimicrobial efficacy with skin performance and HCW acceptability. When selecting ABHR, health care facilities should consider product acceptability, cost (including a risk benefit analysis associated with treating preventable HAIs), and relevant data from product manufacturers.

Biography

Elizabeth De Nardo, joined GOJO Industries, Inc. in March 2008 as a Senior Scientist, conducting research projects in collaboration with experts in the areas of infection control, hand hygiene, Norovirus and Microbiome from different US Institutions. She holds a PhD in General Microbiology with expertise in Virology with more than 20 years of experience as a researcher acquired in previous jobs.

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