

REVIEW ARTICLE

# Infection Control: Old Problems and New Challenges

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Received for publication May 26, 2005; accepted May 27, 2005 (ARCMED-D-05-203).

Infection control faces radical changes at the beginning of the third millennium. The first part of this review focuses on problems not yet solved, such as 1) surveillance systems, which should be active and extremely flexible; 2) infection outbreaks in hospitals and strategies to avoid them; 3) hand washing and alternatives such as rapid hand antisepsis; 4) water and food in the hospital as potential reservoirs of nosocomial pathogens; 5) upgrading of infection control programs to turn them into systems to improve the quality of care; 6) fatal Gram-negative bacteremias in hospitals from developing countries, which can be avoided with better standards of care; 7) the elemental role of the microbiology laboratory in the prevention and control of infections; 8) the unprecedented crisis due to the emergence of specific multi-resistant pathogens; 9) the risks for health-care workers, such as tuberculosis, hepatitis, HIV, SARS, and hemorrhagic fevers; and 10) the need for the consistent application of guidelines. The second part of this review focuses on new challenges for infection control, such as 1) the ever-growing number of immunocompromised patients and basic control measures to avoid opportunistic infections; 2) the concerns about the capacity of the public health systems to deal with terrorist acts; 3) the practice of high-risk procedures in facilities lacking trained personnel, efficient laboratories, and protective items; and 4) gene therapy and its potential infectious complications. Consideration is given to the asymmetric development of infection control globally. © 2005 IMSS. Published by Elsevier Inc.

*Key Words:* Infection control, Hospital infection, Cross infection, Quality of health care.

## First Part: Old Problems

### *Nosocomial Infections: A Global Problem*

Medical care faces radical changes at the beginning of the third millennium. Because infectious diseases are the second cause of death worldwide, the evolution of emerging and re-emerging diseases will heighten the impact of the changes (1). In many hospitals and healthcare-related centers, an increasing number of invasive procedures and sophisticated medical care is being offered with no regard to the risks implied. The costs of nosocomial infections (NIs), in terms of both money and human suffering, are enormous (2,3). For

instance, in the U.S., they contribute to about 90,000 deaths and \$5 billion in expenses per year (4).

In hospitals, the training of physicians focuses on treatment and diagnosis, with a tendency towards specialization, and infectious complications are perceived as natural and unalterable (5); for instance, for children dying of nosocomial bacteremia in developing countries, an official diagnosis of “neonatal asphyxia” is common. Paradoxically, those hospitals with the worst problems of NIs report the lowest rates; the explanation rests on inadequate surveillance.

The current situation needs a change because evidence is overwhelming: infection control is not an expense but a good investment (6–8). Infection control implies costs but pays for itself, even in countries with limited resources (9–13).

### *Surveillance Systems Come in Several Flavors*

The organization of a surveillance system is the logical initial step of any infection control program because subsequent

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changes must be based on the identification of the local problems, which may be unique (6,14). There is, however, a lack of validation of the existing menu of surveillance systems. Admittedly, passive or retrospective surveillance relying only on chart reports from physicians or nurses is very insensitive, and no hospital should now be using such a system as its only source of information.

Active surveillance methods are currently the only acceptable systems, regardless of the type of hospital or the degree of consolidation of their control programs. The building blocks of any active surveillance system comprise collecting relevant data systematically during a defined period of time, managing and organizing the data, analyzing and interpreting the data, and communicating the results to those empowered to make changes (15).

Hospital-wide, comprehensive, surveillance methods based on the National Nosocomial Infections Surveillance System (NNIS) guidelines (16) are the standard in developed countries and are being followed even in selected hospitals from developing countries. Unfortunately, these surveillance methods are labor intensive, many hospitals lack personnel for such activities, and collecting data may severely limit the time for other critical activities (17). Surveillance systems must be extremely flexible; effective infection control teams will not use a “one size fits all” approach for surveillance. Some hospitals should focus on patients at high risk, such as those hospitalized in intensive care and neonatal units (15,18). After defining the priorities of the institution, the focus could also be on specific problems, such as bacteremia or surgical site infection. Focusing on neonatal bacteremia pays high dividends because extrinsic contamination of IV fluids seems to be a common problem in many settings (19–21).

NIs are usually followed in rates, i.e., the number of patients infected divided by those who were hospitalized in a given period. These rates usually say little because the denominators are diluted by the high numbers of patients attended with little risk, such as those hospitalized for newborn delivery attention. Then, a trend is to follow NI in terms of meaningful denominators as the number of patients exposed to specific risks, such as the rates of pneumonia per 100 patient-days on a ventilator.

#### *Outbreaks Are Not Lost in the Past*

History reminds us that epidemics never end but recur. In fact, we are living in a worldwide pandemic in many hospitals where sophisticated protocols are performed with no attention to the risks and no control programs; under such conditions, a substantial proportion of NIs occur as outbreaks (22,23). Bacteremias cause a relevant fraction of the outbreaks; they are avoided with good nursing standards during the administration of infusates (19,24,25). Pneumonia in ventilated patients, dissemination of resistant bacteria, and some intestinal infections (as those caused by rotavirus

and *Clostridium difficile*) are best prevented and controlled with the use of barriers and isolations (26,27). Good practices during food manipulation are required to avoid common-source intestinal infections (28). As can be deduced from the actions needed, teamwork is required for the prevention and control of outbreaks (29).

Many hospitals globally lack the personnel and necessary resources to detect and avoid outbreaks of NIs. There are difficulties for washing hands and for instituting proper isolation barriers, nursing standards are poor when administering intravenous (IV) fluids, and teamwork for infection control is unheard of in many hospitals. Then, hospitals in some areas of the world may be playing a role as amplifiers of disease, rather than as consolidated institutions to alleviate community diseases.

Hospitals having outbreaks as main causes of NIs must implement programs focused on their prevention as a first step towards consolidation of their programs. Hospitals with Gram-negative bacteremia outbreaks due to infusate contamination must use their resources to solve this problem immediately; no infection control program should focus on other issues in presence of such an urgent demand.

#### *Hand Washing or Hand Disinfection?*

Although easily removed by hand cleansing, transient flora are responsible for most NIs (30). Ignaz Semmelweis established the importance of hand washing more than 150 years ago; compliance with this routine, however, rarely exceeds 40% due to lack of time, inadequate facilities or forgetfulness (31,32). Personnel often fail due to negligence. Sinks are usually few, inconveniently located, and non-functional. Supplies of soap and paper towels are often inadequate and multiple-use cloth towels are commonly used; these towels become damp and harbor Gram-negative bacteria (17). Finally, asking for 100% compliance with hand washing has implications not generally considered: it is almost impossible to achieve, and it could even interfere with patient care as it is very time-consuming (33).

If good hand-washing compliance becomes a difficult task, the promotion of hand antisepsis with alcohol-based rubs is a good alternative; the procedure is fast and easy to adhere to. A number of commercial solutions are available for this purpose, but cheaper alternatives such as alcohol/emollient solutions can be formulated locally (for 1 L of solution, mix 980 mL of 70% isopropyl alcohol with 10–30 mL of glycerin) (17). To our knowledge, however, there is no evidence of the measurable impact of hand disinfection in hospitals from developing countries.

#### *Water and Food in the Hospital*

Tap water is a potential reservoir of nosocomial pathogens. Besides, water supply is contaminated or interrupted in many

hospitals (34–37). Traditionally, waterborne disease is considered related to fecal pollution of water sources (38); although it may be the same in hospitals, the nature of the patients and invasive procedures obliges to consider even non-fecal Gram-negative bacteria and *Legionella* as potential sources of disease. Tap water contaminated with non-fecal Gram-negative rods or non-tuberculous mycobacteria has been correlated with bacteremia, burn infections, and surgical site infections (36,37,39). The ability of Gram-negative bacteria to survive wet environments for long periods explains their common occurrence in sink drains (34); they can pass to patients by health care workers (HCWs) whose hands become contaminated during hand washing (34,36,37).

Water sources are currently thought to be unimportant sources of infection in hospitals from developed countries as they are forced to meet strict hygienic standards. For instance, providing low-quality water in England is considered a criminal offense (38). In most hospitals from developing countries, however, those standards do not exist or are not enforced, bringing about the potential for massive outbreaks of disease. In hospitals in developing countries, infection control personnel must include in their programs periodic rounds to ensure proper functioning of sinks and adequate water chlorination.

Many hospitals do not monitor the quality of foodstuffs that they buy, and several lapses in food-handling are the rule, such as improper cooking or holding temperatures, as well as cross-contamination of foodstuff served raw from those that will sustain cooking, e.g., from meat to vegetables. Incidence of nosocomial diarrhea and its complications could be higher than generally believed (28,40). Infection control professionals should include in their programs the periodic vigilance of food preparation in their hospitals.

### *The Quest for Quality*

Upgrading infection control programs to turn them into systems to improve quality of care is a trend in many hospitals. Although there is little experience with these methods in hospitals from countries with low resources, programs for quality of care are well suited for use in any hospital and there is no reason for not using them in developing countries. Unfortunately, few hospitals have the experience to train and support individuals dedicated to implement and develop quality programs (41). Quality should have its hierarchical levels: leaving the hospital alive should be the fundamental priority; we must prevent outbreaks first. Leaving after suffering no complications comes close; we must prevent endemic infections and non-infectious complications. Leaving after the shortest possible hospital stay comes third; we better get involved in management. Finally, leaving after enjoying some amenities comes fourth; we can get involved with this if we have the time.

To improve their facilities and the quality of their services, maintenance and renovation is constant in hospitals. However, this is a persistent source of dust, which is a risk factor for fungal infections in immunocompromised patients (42,43). Before planning renovation activities, hospital designers of the future will have to consider indications from infection control professionals.

### *Fatal Bacteremias Still a Reality*

Fatal Gram-negative neonatal bacteremias are a minor issue in hospitals from industrialized countries, where they are generally described as past experiences. Gram-negative bacteremia, however, is a substantial risk in hospitals in developing countries. In our experience, important reasons are the use of big stock bottles to load burettes from several patients, the mixing of IV fluids without any care in the wards, the reusing of vials designed to be used once, the pooling of residual medication in vials, and the sharing of syringes to inject drugs into different administration sets (10,17,19–21,25,44–46). Bacteremia associated with IV fluid contamination is usually caused by species of *Klebsiella*, *Enterobacter*, or *Serratia*, collectively members of the Tribe *Klebsiellae* (TK), as these organisms have an extraordinary ability to grow in infusates (47–50). Few data exist on the risk of nosocomial bacteremias in many developing countries, but from isolated reports it seems that they are more common and more severe than those of hospitals in developed countries (19–21,25,36).

In developing nations, a national program should be initiated against Gram-negative bacteremias because they may be the most preventable cause of death in hospitals. To start with, guidelines must discourage the use of IV therapy or nutrition when not strictly necessary. Peripheral catheters should be preferred over central catheters, and percutaneous insertion should be preferred over venous dissection or umbilical catheterization. The use of premixed IV fluid should be preferred; preparation of infusates should be done only in designated areas, away from potential sources of contamination, such as diapers or bedpans. Parenteral nutrition solutions must be prepared only by specially trained personnel and administered promptly. Guidelines should discourage the use of stock bottles to load burettes for several patients, the reuse of single dose vials, the pooling of residual medication in vials, and the sharing of syringes to inject drugs to different administration sets (51).

### *Help Wanted: Skilled Microbiologists*

The role of the microbiology laboratory in the prevention and control of NIs cannot be overemphasized. The success of the hospital infection control efforts hinges to a large extent on the active involvement of the laboratory in many aspects of the program (2,52,53). Laboratory duties include

identifying the organisms responsible for NIs and their antimicrobial susceptibility, reporting timely data relevant to infection control, and supporting the investigations of infectious problems. The most dramatic advances are the procedures for typing hospital organisms for similarity or difference, which helps for tracking bacterial sources (54). Against these sophisticated developments, even now most hospitals globally lack a microbiology laboratory with well-trained technologists. In fact, most hospitals do not draw blood cultures in a routine fashion (36,44), and bottles to inoculate them are a rare commodity. Many of the few existent microbiology laboratories work isolated from any clinical feedback and report mainly colonizing bacteria because of the dependency on non-critical cultures, i.e., not drawn with a needle. This is true even in many tertiary-care centers, with relatively high budgets.

Guidelines should stress the importance of having a microbiology laboratory with skilled personnel in every hospital. Priority should be given to cultures drawn with a needle. Bacteremia is defined by a laboratory report, and blood culture bottles must always be available, mainly in the neonatal and intensive care areas. In cultures not taken with a needle, reporting saprophytes should be avoided in order to prevent antibiotic abuse. Screening cultures from the environment, personnel or even patients are rarely indicated (2,55). Unfortunately, non-critical, environmental, and screening cultures from the personnel plague many laboratories from developing countries, draining a substantial part of their limited resources.

#### *Antibiotic Resistance and De-escalation*

In less than a blink of history's eye, the promise that all bacterial infections would disappear with antibiotics has gone; new, resistant, organisms are replacing the old, susceptible ones (56,57). The costs for developing and approving new antibiotics continue to escalate and, with the rapid emergence of resistance, the incentive to develop new ones diminishes (58). Hospitals are facing an unprecedented crisis due to the emergence of specific pathogens such as *Staphylococcus* resistant to methicillin, *Enterococcus* resistant to vancomycin, multi-resistant Gram-negative rods, and fluconazole-resistant *Candida* (58,59). Most of the NIs that occur in intensive care units are due to microorganisms that are resistant to several antibiotics. Moreover, hospitals in countries with few resources can serve as reservoirs for the dissemination of antimicrobial-resistant pathogens in the community, where misuse of antibiotics is common by pharmacists, patients, parents, and doctors (60,61).

Controlling outbreaks of antibiotic resistance depends on early detection, hand hygiene and implementation of barrier precautions. It sounds straightforward, but most hospitals globally lack a policy for detection and control of antibiotic resistance. A restrictive policy must allow the prescription of some antibiotics only to a few individuals, such as infectious

disease specialists or directors of areas. These antibiotics generally include new cephalosporins, quinolones, vancomycin, and imipenem/meropenem, due to their potential to increase high-level resistance (62). A strategy to limit the use of some antibiotics is to restrict information about the susceptibility pattern of the isolates obtained in the hospital, so that clinicians can prescribe only those antibiotics that are authorized by the infectious disease department. Of course, this strategy requires an efficient microbiology laboratory.

Prophylaxis constitutes a substantial proportion of the antibiotics used in the hospital, and many errors are commonly associated with this practice. These errors include improper selection of the drug, use after surgery, and excessive number of doses. A consensus for the use of preoperative prophylactic antibiotics should be worked with surgeons, indicating the specific cases in which antibiotics would be used and the drug to administer.

Some authors suggest that antibiotic therapy should be instituted in the hospital as soon as sepsis is suspected in critically ill patients. Because of the outbreak of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus* and multi-resistant Gram-negative rods, they suggest adding vancomycin to a carbapenem as initial empirical therapy (63). Such a regimen is modified against specific pathogens when the results of microbial investigation become available (de-escalation antimicrobial chemotherapy). This shotgun policy is already offered in many hospitals, but should be considered in the context of its high cost and potential to cause new resistances. Of course, de-escalation is out of the question in hospitals lacking a high-quality microbiology laboratory, so this should not be recommended in most hospitals globally.

Another approach to limit the resistance is to evaluate the potential usefulness of cycling antibiotics and also the selection of antibiotics with a lower potential to stimulate the appearance of extended-spectrum  $\beta$ -lactamases (64).

#### *Employees Are Valuable Assets*

Healthcare workers are valuable assets, and we cannot afford to lose them to infections acquired in hospitals, such as tuberculosis, hepatitis, HIV/AIDS, SARS, and hemorrhagic fevers such as Ebola. The risks of occupational transmission are increased by common unsafe practices, such as the administration of unnecessary injections and the reuse of non-sterile needles when supplies are low (65,66).

There must be an occupational health program operational in any healthcare setting. Such a program must implement and develop systems for diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of infectious disease not only in healthcare workers but also in volunteer workers and visitors (67). A program should be implemented to increase awareness of the risks involved in handling needles and body fluids, to accept hepatitis B vaccination, and to use adequate protective measures to avoid injury or contagion. Educational materials should

be appropriate in content to the educational level, literacy, and language of the employee (68,69). It is important to follow standard precautions with any patient during interactions when there is potential for blood exposure, an approach that does not require knowledge of the patient's blood-borne infections status. It is important also to test source patients after an occupational exposure, for optimal post-exposure management. International guidelines are needed to define inappropriate uses of injections and to educate the public to dispel much of the myth about their advantages. Standards must be established for the management and disposal of needles and sharps.

Vaccination programs should be in place in every hospital. Medical evaluation must be done before hiring, obtaining histories, performing physical examinations, and determining immunization status (65,69). Baseline PPD testing will identify those who have been previously infected with tuberculosis.

*Writing What We Do; Doing What Is Written*

Evidence shows that the consistent application of guidelines reduces the risks of NI. Guidelines should be written and followed in every institution as every medical center is unique, making hard to translate practices from one to another (70). Apart from hospitals in developed countries, however, most hospitals lack guidelines to organize and develop infection control programs. This challenge cannot be faced with money but with hard desk work. To start with, guidelines should be realistic, lean and simple to read, adapted to the nature of the institutions; those transcribed from hospitals in developed countries will not be operative in different settings. For institutions with few resources and personnel, one should start with a minimalist vision rather than a baroque one, stripping infection control of complex definitions, unattainable isolations, and intensive surveillance. Writing what we will not do is a sure way to the unfortunate position of trying to change the institution to meet a series or preconceived regulations not appropriate

for the hospital; when this happens, guidelines become dead words collecting dust on shelves.

Up to this point, we have described old problems on infection control. Before going into future challenges that infection control faces, it is convenient to stress the disparities prevalent between hospitals with consolidated programs and those whose programs are incipient or non-existent. Table 1 describes some of those differences.

**Second Part. New Challenges**

*The Ever-Growing Number of Immunocompromised Patients*

There is a growing number of immunocompromised patients because of the use of intensive therapeutic regimens in patients with cancer and organ transplantation, besides those with HIV infection. Improvements in patient survival have been observed in all categories, but the risks of infection related to immunodeficiency continue to be substantial by either resident or environmental bacterial, fungal, viral, and protozoal parasites (71). Even low-virulence microbes (opportunistic pathogens) may invade, proliferate, and cause disease in the immunodeficient host. Furthermore, newer organisms previously considered as contaminants or harmless colonizers have now emerged as significant human pathogens in the immunocompromised host. Prevention of infection and, failing this, prompt diagnosis and treatment remain the cornerstones of management. The importance of basic infection control measures cannot be over-emphasized. In addition, appropriate prophylactic agents, rapid diagnostic techniques and the early institution of appropriate therapy are essential (72). Against what is conventionally believed, no benefit of protective isolation has been found in hospitals, even for patients with severe immunodeficiency (73).

*Getting Ready for Bioterrorist Acts*

The terrorist acts in the U.S. during 2001 renewed concerns about the capacity of the public health systems to deal with them. Hospital plans that addressed bioterrorism

**Table 1.** Differences prevalent between consolidated and non-consolidated programs for hospital infection control

Characteristic	Consolidated programs	Non-consolidated programs
Surveillance	Active	Passive
Infection outbreaks	Not common, detected	Common, often undetected
Hospital water	Meets standards	Does not meet standards
Sinks	Functional, accessible	Non-functional, non-accessible
Food handling	Compliant with guidelines	Non-compliant with guidelines
Source of bacteremias	Mostly from the catheters	Mostly from infusate contamination
Microbiology laboratory	Procedures and reports with clinical relevance	Non-existent or reporting with little clinical relevance
Antibiotic prophylaxis, for surgery	Adequate drugs, used before the surgery	Inadequate drug or used after the surgery
New and costly antibiotics	Available. Few doctors can prescribe them	Often unavailable. When available, prescribed by any doctor
Risks for healthcare workers	Policies for prevention and education	Lack policies for prevention and education
Guidelines	Realistic and followed	Absent, unrealistic, or not followed

increased significantly as did the awareness of the community (74–76). Even small hospitals are obliged now to have bioterrorism preparedness plans in the U.S., monitoring critical or unexplained deaths, training on bioterrorism agents, integrating criminal investigations of bioterrorism incidents, developing emergency response plans, and implementing strategies for mass vaccination and treatment of bioterrorism victims. Health care providers will be the first responders during a biologic attack and will be called upon to diagnose diseases such as anthrax, tularemia or smallpox.

The benefits of bioterrorism preparedness, however, should not be honored without question. Just seeing the pains of persons through airports in the U.S. shows the extremes of measures taken, of dubious value. By the same token, some health programs have contributed to death, illness, and great expense without apparent benefit. Several serious illnesses have resulted from the U.S. smallpox vaccination program; yet there is no clear evidence that a threat of smallpox exposure ever existed (77,78). Deaths occurred after vaccinations, but cause-effect relationships are unclear. The anthrax spores released in 2001 have been linked to secret U.S. military laboratories; then, resultant problems could have been avoided if those laboratories were not in operation in the first place.

Globally, we must follow realistic policies on bioterrorism preparedness; injudicious expansion of preparedness programs may squander health resources and increase the dangers of accidental release of pathogens (76,77).

#### *The State of the Art at the State of Siege*

The continuous scientific and technological developments are rapidly changing the therapeutic field in diverse areas. Invasive procedures, immunosuppressive treatments, biologic and genetic interventions, biologic and synthetic implants, transplantation and xenotransplantation are just a few of a variety of high-risk procedures where infection control should be participating. A serious problem is the practice of high-risk procedures in facilities lacking trained personnel, efficient laboratories, and protective items. Examples of this reality are the sporadic occurrence of SARS in laboratories lacking the pertinent barriers and guidelines (79) and the risk of health care workers to acquire tuberculosis as has been reported in specialty microbiological laboratories lacking basic barriers (80).

Performing critical interventions in under-budgeted hospitals is a common event in developing countries, often with fatal consequences. For instance, liver and bone-marrow transplants are performed in hospitals lacking infectious disease specialists or microbiology support, or pancreatic cell from piglets are transplanted to humans, without any official control. As noted earlier, sophisticated procedures are common in neonatal intensive care units where no trained personnel are available or even access to sinks with soap and potable tap water. Under such circumstances, a potential

risk procedure becomes a tragedy generally associated with extremely high rates of mortality (36).

Even though there is a gap between the development of scientific knowledge and its clinical applications, new biological interventions come in growing numbers. However, the ability of clinicians to learn about the risks of these new interventions is extremely limited. Given the characteristics and cost of these new biologic treatments, the possibilities to complete methodologically sound research is poor. Potentially, biological modifiers such as tumor necrosis factor antagonists could imply a high risk of infectious complications (81). Tuberculosis and other bacterial and viral infections have been reported with an increased frequency in studies done in populations with a low incidence, and then the expected frequency in countries with high prevalence of tuberculosis could be even higher as could happen for other infectious complications.

#### *Gene Therapy: Deliberate Therapeutic Infections*

The first *ex vivo* gene therapy protocol was approved in the U.S. in 1989, and the first *in vivo* protocol with a virus administered into a human lung was carried out in 1993 (82). Many human diseases have been targeted for gene therapy, from monogenic diseases to neoplastic, degenerative, and infectious diseases. The possibility to identify a therapeutic gene and introduce it to the patient through a viral vector is now more alluring than ever, and the number of protocols proposed is escalating. The infectivity and pathogenic potential of viruses has taken gene therapy into the sphere of infection control (83).

Although gene therapy is currently limited to a few high-quality medical centers, it will be a frequent procedure in the future even in not-so-well-organized institutions all over the world. The potential for even unexpected complications should be a real concern as the number of viral vectors for delivering the genes is substantial and growing. Although the recommendations for infection control in gene therapy are still tentative, we better err on the side of caution. As happened with adenoviral vectors, once data on vector safety become available, the stringent infection control procedures used initially can be relaxed (83).

#### **Conclusions**

Health care is being streamlined to be highly effective and efficient. As a result, infection control has seen remarkable advances leading to more sophisticated data collection and analyses, and more efficient strategies for intervention in the hospitals. However, infection control is still under construction due to the introduction of new and sophisticated invasive procedures dictated by scientific developments which are changing the face of medicine. Additionally, challenges are great because the consolidation of infection

**Table 2.** An outline of useful actions for hospitals with little or no experience in prevention and control of infectious diseases

1. Organize a committee and establish the best active surveillance method for your institution.
2. Check for the quality of the hospital's tap water (proper chlorination).
3. Break barriers for hand washing or alcohol rubs and educate for compliance.
4. Promote cultures taken with a needle (blood cultures are essential!).
5. If Gram-negative pediatric bacteremias are still common, control such an emergency first (avoid infusate mixtures!).
6. Develop your own guidelines. Be realistic and escalate them.
7. Check for the type and quality of antiseptics used for surgery.
8. Supervise timely antibiotic prophylaxis for wound infection.
9. Control the use of carbapenems, new cephalosporins, quinolones, and vancomycin.
10. Educate about risks for the personnel. Promote hepatitis B vaccination and be aware of tuberculosis in hospital personnel.

control programs is very asymmetrical globally. In hospitals without consolidated infection control programs, it is easy to become enchanted with the impressive results of advanced programs from institutions that have decades of experience. In such circumstances, we must remember that the basics of an elemental program are still applicable today and that we must start small and aim big. We need a renewed commitment to help ensure the safety of our patients. To say that "we must prevent, educate and train" is rather vague; to avoid clichés, we must establish specific points for initial action in hospitals without a tradition of infection control, as those described in Table 2.

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