

What is the distance between saying and doing?

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Hand hygiene (HH) is a simple action of great importance in the prevention of nosocomial infections. Studies show that the hands of healthcare professionals are a reservoir of pathogens with deleterious effects for both patients and workers. Despite evidence demonstrating the magnitude in the chain of transmission of nosocomial infections and the effects of HH procedures to reduce these indicators, many professionals have a passive attitude towards the problem, which leads to discussions on the difference between saying and doing it.¹

Regardless of the health service structure, of the guidelines provided and available resources, the problem with poor adherence to HH habit is evident in most health services. Although there is a unanimous

perception amongst healthcare workers on its importance, studies have shown that up to 70% of professionals perceive education as the most important strategy in implementing these practices.² We also observed the relevance regarding microbial resistance through the associated use with microbial control in reducing rates of carbapenem-resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.³

The HH habit is a topic discussed since childhood that is not strictly followed by a high percentage of the population, including health professionals, which makes us wonder: What happens between the recognition of a practice as essential and the capacity to make it into a habit? What leads properly trained, encouraged and, in theory, aware individuals not to

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optimize this simple habit? What is the reason for the increase in HH during peaks of infectious disease outbreaks, as observed during the H1N1 pandemic in 2009 and the subsequent lack of maintenance?⁴ How can training programs in healthcare services solve this problem?

We draw on the possibility of a new focus on health education strategies that have the capacity to transform rules into habits, which will encourage a different view, rather than an imposition, to infection control professionals, to promote it as a positive attitude, recognizing it as a symbol of self-care and responsibility with the assisted patients.

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