Hand-hygiene reminders on a surgical ward: a before-and-after audit

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Key finding. Observed hand-hygiene compliance rose from 64% (410 observed opportunities) before the reminders to 79% (395 opportunities) after them.

Background

Hand hygiene at the right moments is one of the simplest ways to prevent infections in hospital. Audits on the ward in 2024 showed that staff often missed the moment before touching a patient.

Method

Two trained observers recorded hand-hygiene opportunities for four weeks before and four weeks after we put up reminder signs and placed hand-rub dispensers at every bed. All data were anonymous; no staff member was identified.

Synthetic example for the course Introduction to agentic AI. Not a real report.

Results

Compliance improved for every type of staff. The largest change was before touching a patient. Compliance after touching the patient's surroundings changed least.

Conclusions

Simple reminders and better placed dispensers were followed by higher compliance. Observers may change behaviour by being present, so the true level is likely lower than measured. We will repeat the audit in six months.

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