

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the infection prevention and control programmes in Belgian acute care hospitals

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Background

- In Belgium, several core components of infection prevention and control (IPC) programmes were defined by an expert group.
- Since 2014, acute care hospitals (n=104) are legally required to report their compliance with these components annually.
- Based on this registration a score per hospital is calculated and made publically available.

Main objective:

The objective is to define, prioritize and implement strategies and interventions to prevent healthcare-associated infections (HCAI), in order to improve the quality of care. Based on the 2020 data we assessed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these IPC core components.

Methods

Quality indicators

- Defined by an expert group
- 65 indicators divided in 4 subgroups (organisation; resources; activities; and process)

Data collection

- Registration of 2020 data not mandatory due to the COVID-19 pandemic (participation rate 70%, n=73)
- Dedicated online registration tool

Analyses

- For each indicator the proportion of hospitals implementing the indicator was calculated.
- Alcohol-based hand rub consumption in Liter per 1,000 hospitalization days was calculated per year.

Results

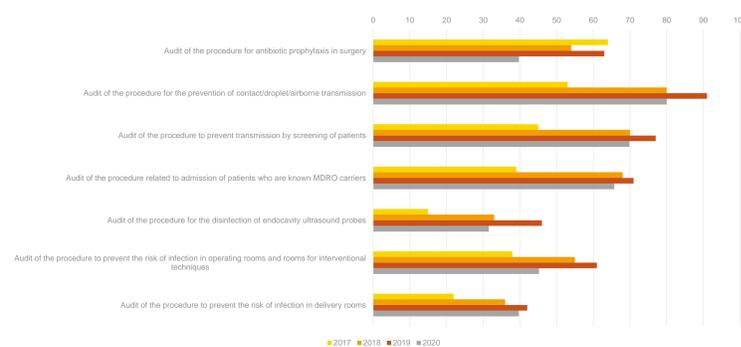
Proportions of hospitals implementing indicators

- By at large, 2020 findings are similar to 2015-2019 results
- At least 95% of the hospitals complied with 33 of the 65 indicators
- Six of these indicators were met by all hospitals



Figure 1: Proportion of Belgian acute care hospital meeting indicators related to auditing, 2013-2020

- A decrease of more than 10% in the proportion of hospitals that complied was observed for 12 indicators
- Of which 10 were related to auditing (figure 1)



Alcohol-based hand rub consumption

- Alcohol-based hand rub consumption can be seen as an indicator of hand hygiene compliance

- Since 2013, this consumption increased
- A sharper increase observed between 2019 and 2020 (figure 2)



Figure 2: Alcohol-based hand rub consumption in litre per 1,000 hospitalisation days in Belgian acute care hospitals, 2013-2020

Conclusions

- Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, at least 95% of the participating hospitals complied with half of the IPC core components in 2020.
- Less implemented IPC core components were often related to auditing. Possible hypotheses for this decrease are (1) time constraints due to additional tasks by the COVID-19 pandemic for the IPC team; (2) COVID-19 related measures have hindered the implementation of these components.
- Since the COVID-19 pandemic, a sharp increase in the consumption of alcohol-based hand rub has been observed. Although, this registration could not verify if this was due to an improved hand hygiene compliance among the health care workers.

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