

Dealing with Airborne Pathogens

At the Wellcome Centre in London on 19th June 2007, our Chair Derek Butler attended a discussion forum in relation to the airborne transmissions of infectious pathogens.

The discussion followed the Press Launch of the air disinfection technology developed by inov8[®] <http://www.hesmagazine.com/story.asp?sectioncode=196&storyCode=2045150>

Attending this discussion forum were three of Britain's most eminent microbiologists, Professor Hugh Pennington, Professor Clive Begg and Professor Derek Elwood.

The discussion revolved around how pathogens move in the medical environment, one of those ways of movement is the airborne transmission. The three professors gave a summary on their interpretation of the airborne transmission route, and the total effect this would have on trying to implement good infection control. During this discussion the professors agreed that the airborne transmission route was of grave concern over three decades ago, however it would seem that the medical profession and those in previous governments considered it not a major problem. Further discussion took place on the government's targets for reducing infections in the healthcare environment, and that merely relying on one source of control would only reduce infections by a given percentage, and that figure would then plateau out and not reduce any further.

There was discussion around hand hygiene and its benefits in infection control. It was agreed that hand hygiene was and still is of paramount importance, but this was a system of hygiene that has been known for well over a hundred years and the system of hand cleansing is still the same now as it was then. It was agreed by those at this discussion that we are now dealing with a medical environment of the 21st Century and therefore our infection control must respond to the ever-changing environment in which pathogens develop.

Everyone agreed that although the technology for dealing with airborne pathogens has been known about for decades and has not been fully utilised in the UK, this technology can play its part in both controlling infections and reducing the environmental reservoir.

Using this technology in conjunction with other infection control methods could have a significant effect on reducing infection rates if we take this opportunity to use this in our hospitals and healthcare environments.

Derek Butler

Chair

MRSA Action UK

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<http://www.mrsaactionuk.net>