Bath Basins: Who Knows Where Evil Lurks
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Problem:
There is no process in place for the storage and cleaning of bath basins in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Current practice in the NICU is to use a single bath basin for the duration of an infant’s admission, or until the baby is big enough for a larger bath and the basin is no longer considered necessary. The bath basins are rinsed after each use, dried with a paper towel, and placed in a drawer by the infant’s bedside. The basins are used to store various personal care items. There was concern that the bath basins were colonized with bacteria that could potentially lead to hospital associated infections.

Evidence:
Nosocomial infections are an encumbrance on health care systems. The potential spread of hospital acquired infection to an already compromised population is associated with increased morbidity and mortality.

Strategy:
The Infection Control Department was contacted and requested to culture bath basins. A total of 30 bath basins were cultured over a four week period. Basins were tested if the infant had been in the NICU for at least one week. The laboratory performed empirical identification for all organisms and also tested for Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) and Vancomycin Resistant Enterococcus (VRE).

Practice Change:
19 out of 30 basins (63%) cultured grew one or more types of bacteria. Upon learning the results of the study, the Infection Control Department’s proposed Bath Basin and Supplies Process was implemented in the NICU.

Evaluation
Bath basins were cultured six months after the protocol was implemented.

Results
Three of 14 bath basins (21%) grew “rare coagulase negative Staphylococcus”. This decrease is statistically significant p=0.0117.

Recommendations
Procedures for disinfecting and storage of bath basins are necessary in all patient populations to avoid hospital acquired infection.
Lessons Learned:
This study demonstrated that improperly disinfected bath basins are a potential reservoir to a variety of pathogenic bacteria that could lead to hospital associated infections.

Bibliography:
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