

Attitudes and beliefs, not just knowledge, influence the effectiveness of environmental cleaning by environmental service workers

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ABSTRACT

Environmental cleaning has been shown in numerous studies to have a direct impact in reducing Healthcare Associated Infections (HAIs). The importance of the Environmental Service Worker (ESW) in directly interrupting the chain of infection cannot be overlooked. Interventions for improving environmental cleaning often focus on education; however, little effort is given to understanding ESWs' attitudes and beliefs towards their role and how understanding these attitudes and beliefs may help to develop strategies that further improve environmental cleaning

BACKGROUND

This study highlights not only the importance of educating ESWs on how to use cleaning chemicals and disinfectants and how their role directly impacts the wellbeing of patients or residents in the facilities they work but also how such training programs need to factor in the attitudes and beliefs ESWs have in how they approach and feel about the work they do.

STUDY

Attitudes and beliefs of ESWs regarding their work and their impact on the effectiveness of cleaning have not previously been explored. Using the theory of planned behavior as a framework, questionnaires and focus groups were utilized to determine if a person's attitudes and beliefs might influence the effectiveness of their cleaning. To summarize, the theory of planned behavior provides a framework for understanding what drives

behavior. An individual's behavior is driven by behavioral intentions (an individual's readiness to perform a given behavior) which in turn are influenced by three enabling variables: 1. Attitude which is driven by the attitude toward the behavior. Attitude is based on individual's positive or negative evaluation of self-performance of the particular behavior and encompasses behavioral belief which is an individual's belief about consequences of particular behavior. 2. Subjective Norm which is driven by expectations of others. It is the individual's perception of social normative pressures, or relevant others' beliefs that he or she should or should not perform such behavior. Normative belief is defined as an individual's perception about the particular behavior, which is influenced by the judgment of significant others (e.g., parents, spouse, friends, teachers, colleagues, employers). 3. Perceived Behavioral Control which refers to people's perceptions of their ability to perform a given behavior and reflects an individual's Perceived behavioral control regarding the extent to which they are able to control or influence outcomes. The questionnaire was administered to the ESWs which included 20 statements that were rated using a Likert scale where 1 was defined as completely disagree and 5 as completely agree. Focus groups were facilitated pre and post the educational intervention. The educational intervention was designed as a 2hour education session which covered basic infection prevention and control issues and addressed issues raised through the survey and focus groups including time pressures and personal motivating factors.

Microbial contamination of 10 standardized high-touch surfaces (computer keyboard, space bar and mouse, monitor silence button, thermometer, intravenous pump buttons, intercom buttons, room light switch and plate, patient lamp switch and parent chair) was determined before and after the educational intervention. Surfaces were classified as adequately cleaned (ACC

RESULTS

The questionnaire had a 53% response rate (16/30) and highlighted that the ESW's intentions were consistent at approximately 4.5 out of 5. Normative beliefs (as an individual's perception about the particular behavior) carried the strongest relation to intent versus behavioral beliefs (an individual's belief about consequences of particular behavior) and control beliefs (an individual's beliefs about the presence of factors that may facilitate or impede performance of the behavior). The data elicited from the focus groups highlighted that ESWs intend to do a good job; they take pride in their work

and are committed to patient and families. However, they perceived little behavioral control in how they are able to control or influence outcomes. Positive feedback may help to lessen their frustration and perceived helplessness.

STUDY CONCLUSION

As stated in the study, hospital housekeeping is a complex task and understanding the behavioral determinants of cleaning by ESWs is essential to informing the development of interventions that can influence ESWs' beliefs and attitudes, which in turn may improve the effectiveness of environmental cleaning in a sustained way.

REFERENCES

Matlow AG, Wray R, Richardson SE. (2012). Attitudes and beliefs, not just knowledge, influence the effectiveness of environmental cleaning by environmental service workers. AJIC. 40(3): 260-2.