

## Editorial

# Importance and Role of Hospital Infection Control Committee (HICC) in a Hospital

### Introduction:

'Nosocomial infections, also called "hospital-acquired infections" are infections acquired during hospital care which are not present or incubating at admission.' Infections originates after admission by more than 48 hours are usually considered nosocomial. K Park (387) Infections acquired by staffs or visitors to any health care facility may also be considered as nosocomial infections. Hospital acquired infections (HAIs) are the most frequent adverse event affect patient safety throughout the world. Source of HAIs may be endogenous, exogenous, contact with staffs, contaminated instruments and needles, individual nutritional and immune status; and, above all it exists in low, middle and high income country like USA though at variable rates. So, these unexpected and unacceptable HAIs in my opinion may be unavoidable too. But adhering to standard practices by all concerned can minimize the number of infections.

The most common HAIs includes;

- Urinary tract infections, pneumonia, and diarrhea
- Infections following surgery or invasive medical procedures
- Maternal and newborn infections

Recent observation by WHO identified that post surgery infections is the most surveyed and the most common type of hospital acquired infection in the underdeveloped countries and affects as much as one third of operated patients. Surgical site infection (SSI) however, ranked second in European countries and in the USA. In Bangladesh a study done by Faruquzzaman (2011) in Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) found 30% of the study patients suffered from HAIs. Among those who had

HAIs 38.70% acquired wound infections, 26.60% acquired urinary tract infection, 19.20% acquired acute respiratory tract infections and 12.50% acquired acute gastrointestinal tract infections.

HAIs affects economically not only the patients but also the country indirectly by decreasing the DALY (Disease adjusted life years) that is loss of working hours. Wound infection in general surgery required extra 9.90 days hospitalization, in OBG department it was 3days and 19.80 days for orthopedic surgery revealed by Coello et al.(1993)

It is essential to minimize the risk of spread of infection to patients and staff in hospital by implementing effective infection control program. This document briefly outlines the broad principles and practices of infection control measures that are essential for the prevention and management of infection.

As many factors contribute to the risk of HAIs; so, the prevention of these infections requires integration of measures that might be different from one setup to another. For instance, the prevention of SSIs requires quite a number of measures before, during and after surgery. However, the implementation of measures is not standardized worldwide. Currently there is no international guideline available. In Bangladesh we have a published manual for Bangladesh under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Bangladesh. Hospital Infection Control activities must be based on some policies and are needed to be formulated, practiced properly and monitored closely by the Hospital Infection Control Committee (HICC). The polices need to be followed are;

1. Guidelines for each procedure done with the aim to prevent infections.
2. Policy for judicious use of antibiotics.
3. Policy for survey and surveillance
4. Disinfection policy
5. Isolation policy specially for airborne diseases.
6. Policy for investigating an outbreak of infection

### **Suggested members:**

Hospital Infection Control Committee (HICC) is usually a multidisciplinary committee. In absence of a definite guideline about the structure of HICC, most of the hospitals follow the following one;

- Chairperson – Someone from top management such as CEO, Vice President or Director or Medical Superintendent.
- Convener/Coordinator – Microbiologist / Infection Control Officer
- Clinical members – One member from each clinical specialties and super-specialties, including Anesthesiology, Critical Care, Emergency Medicine, Laboratory services, Blood Bank, Nursing Services and Allied Health Specialties.
- Non-clinical members – Administrative and maintenance personnel from Operation theatre, IPD, ICU, OPD, Emergency department, Laundry, CSSD, Waste disposal, Maintenance, General Management and Bio-medical engineer.

### **Importance of HICC in a hospital:**

Infection control is the responsibility of all healthcare workers. Adhering to good infection control practice by everyone concerned can prevent being infected in the setup. The Infection Control Committee provides leadership for all employees throughout the facility. The ICC has the responsibility to communicate with all concerned staff with the information in relation to the policies, procedures, and evaluation processes in order to create the safest healthcare environment. It also guides all concerned employees to adopt

standardized infection control measures throughout the facility in order to ensure same level of high standard care is provided in all departments and to all patients. This standardization includes control and maintenance of the facility's environment and ensures patients rights of safety. For instance, the Infection Control Committee should have policy and will ensure the same level of safety measures for infection prevention and control irrespective of the place the procedure done; say, within the operation theatre(OT) or outside the OT.

### **Specific roles and responsibilities of HICC:**

By the name of the committee, one can understand that the HICC is fully responsible to suggest infection control measures with the aim to minimize the risk of infection as low as possible among the patients as well as the staffs and visitors.

Members of the committee discusses and decides on each matter that can have an effect on infection control. Specific roles and responsibilities includes;

- Develop and approve organization wide infection control program, policies, activities and manual
- Establish standard precaution practices to be followed across the hospital
- Establish definitions and criteria for identifying and reporting of all infections among patients and personnel
- Guide departments on evidence based infection control practices
- Set benchmark of HAI rates for monitoring the effectiveness of the measures already taken.
- Validate methods for calculating HAI rates
- Review HAI rates periodically and recommend actions accordingly
- Develop antibiotic policy in conjunction with pharmaco-therapeutics committee
- Develop protocol for handling of infection outbreak and manage such situations
- Other similar matters related to infection control.

## **Communication process of the HICC with Employees of all levels**

The HICC needs to provide written infection control procedure(s) to all concerned employees. It is also responsible to recommend and arrange through subcommittee educational opportunities, training and retraining. It should also arrange monitoring activities, recommend survey and surveillance. If problem arises either in endemic or epidemic form the committee should response in a way that suits the situation and will provide specific direction clearly to department(s) to overcome the problem in earliest possible time. The committee will meet on regular basis and as required and the meeting minutes should be disseminated to the concerned departments as required. In this way the committee facilitates the communication, corrects actions among all concerned departments. The distinct purpose of the committee is simple; that is, ensuring the safety of the patients by preventing and controlling infection. Achieving this goal is not easy hence requires devotion, skills and input by the healthcare disciplines and full cooperation of all employee. A fully active ICC will provide clear and complete direction and help everyone to create and maintain a safe hospital environment for all.

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## **References**