

Artificial finger nails.



Besides health care workers who do not wash their hands there is a new threat to hospitalized patients, the use of artificial nails!

In the fight against hospital acquired infections, multiple infections could be prevented if nurses took definitive action in one area of care, that of **Hand Hygiene**.

To accomplish satisfactory hand hygiene the condition of Health Care Workers (HCW) hands need to be in tip-top condition & this includes NAILS.

Several studies have shown an increased number of pathogens on artificial nails compared with natural nails. It is suggested that HCWs who wear artificial nails or those that have old chipped nail polish on natural nails tend to harbour potentially harmful bacteria, mainly gram-negative bacilli & yeast.

Researches note that gram-negative bacilli on the hands of HCW cause the majority of nosocomial infections (HAI).

STUDY

112 Nurses involved in direct patient care had fingernail cultures taken, before & after 10 second hand scrubs.

56 with natural nails & 56 with artificial nail tips.

36% of nurses with artificial nails had gram-negative bacilli before washing, compared to 5% of those who had natural nails.

Post hand washing 41% of nurses with artificial nails cultured positive compared to 9% of those with natural nails. (The researchers speculate the increase was due to loosening of the skin surface during hand washing)

After hand washing, the nurses with artificial nails who cultured positive 7 of them had >500 colony forming gram-negative rods & 5 >100 . The nurses with natural nails had no more than 4.

Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology. 21(8):505-509, Aug 2000.