Antibiotic Resistance in Non–Major Metropolitan Skilled Nursing Facilities: Prevalence and Interfacility Variation

Author(s): Christopher J. Crnich, MD, MS; Megan Duster, MT(ASCP); Timothy Hess, PhD; David R. Zimmerman, PhD; Paul Drinka, MD

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Antibiotic Resistance in Non–Major Metropolitan Skilled Nursing Facilities: Prevalence and Interfacility Variation

Skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) represent ideal environments for the emergence and spread of antibiotic resistance.1 Studies have found that residents of Veterans Affairs (VA) SNFs2,3 and non-VA SNFs in major metropolitan areas4,5 are frequently colonized with antibiotic-resistant bacteria (ARB). The extent to which residents of nonurban SNFs are colonized with ARB remains poorly understood. Intrinsic differences in patient populations, referral patterns, and other contextual factors may fuel very different patterns of antibiotic resistance in nonurban SNFs. Our group recently completed a longitudinal study to document patterns of antibiotic resistance in several SNFs located in nonurban counties of south-central Wisconsin. Here, we present the colonization results of surveillance cultures performed at the inception of the study cohort in 2008–2009.

The University of Wisconsin’s Institutional Review Board approved this study. A potential pool of 39 SNFs (size, 60 or more beds) located in 9 south-central Wisconsin counties was constituted from a directory of licensed facilities maintained by the state of Wisconsin. A randomly assigned number was used to determine the order in which facilities were approached by the research team. Six of the first 10 facilities approached agreed to participate. Variables describing the characteristics of the facility and the resident population were constructed from annual data collected during the state survey process as well as data collected from medical records of subjects at study entry.

Residents of participating SNFs over the age of 18 years, including those with cognitive impairment, were eligible to participate. After written informed consent was obtained, multianatomical screening for colonization with methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) and fluoroquinolone-resistant gram-negative bacteria (FQRGNB) was performed. Cultures of nares, skin of the axilla and groin, and perianal skin (or stool) were obtained from all subjects to detect MRSA colonization. Additional cultures of wounds, the insertion site of nonurinary indwelling medical devices, and urine collected from indwelling urinary devices were obtained, when applicable. The same body sites, exclusive of nares and axilla/groin, from indwelling urinary devices were obtained, when applicable. The same body sites, exclusive of nares and axilla/groin, from indwelling urinary devices were obtained, when applicable. The same body sites, exclusive of nares and axilla/groin, from indwelling urinary devices were obtained, when applicable. The same body sites, exclusive of nares and axilla/groin, from indwelling urinary devices were obtained, when applicable.

Point estimates and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) of the proportion of residents colonized with MRSA and FQRGNB were calculated. Pearson $\chi^2$ tests were performed to identify whether a significant difference in the proportion of subjects colonized with MRSA and FQRGNB across study locations was present. When applicable, visual inspection of confidence limits was performed to identify facility pairs accounting for those differences.

The characteristics of the participating facilities, including characteristics of participating subjects in aggregate, are presented in Table 1. Of the 851 residents in the 6 participating SNFs, 449 (53%) were screened at baseline. An equal proportion of subjects were colonized with MRSA (22.3% [95% CI, 13.7%–30.9%]) and FQRGNB (21.3% [95% CI, 13.3%–29.3%]). Approximately 5% of participating subjects were cocolonized with MRSA and FQRGNB (95% CI, 2.8%–7.1%). Overall, 38.7% (95% CI, 32.9%–44.5%) of subjects screened were colonized with MRSA and/or FQRGNB.

Significant variation in the proportion of subjects colonized with MRSA (Pearson $\chi^2 = 14.6, P = .012$) and FQRGNB (Pearson $\chi^2 = 13.2, P = .022$) was identified across the 6 facilities. A significant difference in the prevalence of MRSA was identified between facility 3 (13.0%) and facility 4 (33.7%), and a significant difference in the prevalence of FQRGNB was identified between facility 2 (29.1%) and facility 6 (11.3%). The characteristics of facilities with the highest prevalence of MRSA or FQRGNB were not qualitatively different from those of facilities with a lower prevalence of MRSA or FQRGNB (Table 1).

The generalizability of our findings may be limited by the method in which study facilities were selected. Our study facilities, while representative of nonurban SNFs that cater to long-term-stay residents requiring nursing services of low complexity, may not be representative of urban SNFs that provide a more complex level of nursing care.6 Nevertheless, the prevalence of MRSA in facilities in our study is not substantively different from that recently described for SNFs in a highly urbanized county in California.7 Comparable data on the prevalence of FQRGNB in other SNFs are not available. However, recently published studies describing sharp increases in the proportion of clinical isolates obtained from residents of Northeastern SNFs that were resistant to fluoroquinolone antibiotics8 as well as a high prevalence of FQRGNB colonization among SNF residents with an indwelling medical device in place support the generalizability of our findings. In combination, these data suggest that a postfluoroquinolone era has begun to emerge in US SNFs.

Few studies have attempted to measure the variation in antibiotic resistance across SNFs within the same geographic region.7,9 The 2-fold variation in FQRGNB prevalence and 3-fold variation in MRSA prevalence seen among SNFs in our study raise questions that require further study. Specifically, is variation being driven by differences in referral patterns, intrafacility antibiotic prescribing, intrafacility adherence to transmission-based precautions, or some combi-
TABLE 1. Facility Characteristics and Prevalence of Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria for 6 Skilled Nursing Facilities in South-Central Wisconsin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facility characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of beds</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County urbanizationa</td>
<td>Small metropolitan</td>
<td>Nonmetropolitan</td>
<td>Small metropolitan</td>
<td>Nonmetropolitan</td>
<td>Hospital based, nonprofit</td>
<td>Freestanding, nonprofit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>Freestanding, nonprofit</td>
<td>Freestanding, nonprofit</td>
<td>Freestanding, nonprofit</td>
<td>Hospital based, nonprofit</td>
<td>Freestanding, nonprofit</td>
<td>Freestanding, nonprofit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicare per diem,b %</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dementia unit</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation unit</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Resident characteristics</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LOS, months</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitalization in prior 3 months, %</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antibiotic use in prior 3 months, %</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>59.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indwelling medical device, %</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wound or ostomy, %</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colonization data</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MRSA prevalence, %</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FQRGNB prevalence, %</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocolonization prevalence, %</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either MRSA or FQRGNB, %</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** FQRGNB, fluoroquinolone-resistant gram-negative bacilli; LOS, length of stay; MRSA, methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.

a Level determined using US Department of Agriculture urban influence codes.

b Derived from cross-sectional census data collected during the facility's 2008 annual state survey.

c Aggregate baseline characteristics of subjects enrolled in the study.

d Counted as present when any of the following were present: (1) indwelling urinary catheter (either Foley or suprapubic), (2) percutaneous feeding tube, or (3) tracheostomy.

In summary, our study affirms the notion that residents of SNFs are commonly colonized with MRSA and FQRGNB, even in nonurban facilities that provide a relatively low complexity of nursing care. Considerable variation in the prevalence of MRSA and FQRGNB in SNFs in the same geographic region exists. The explanations for this degree of interfacility variation remain poorly understood and deserve further study.

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Christopher J. Crnich, MD, MS;†,2 Megan Duster, MT(ASCP);1 Timothy Hess, PhD;1 David R. Zimmerman, PhD;1,4 Paul Drinka, MD1,5


Address correspondence to Christopher J. Crnich, MD, MS, 1685 Highland Avenue, MFCB 5217, Madison, WI 53705 (cjc@medicine.wisc.edu).

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What Is the Optimal Period for Measuring Hand Hygiene Compliance: Are Longer Periods Better than 20-Minute Periods?

Direct observation of hand hygiene is considered the gold standard for measuring healthcare worker (HCW) hand hygiene compliance (HHC) for clinical audit and hand hygiene intervention trials. Many studies and audits observe for 20–30 minutes, but systematic review shows that others observe for 1–4 hours or more, without explaining the rationale for this longer observation period.1 World Health Organization (WHO) guidance recommends observation for 20 minutes (with an additional 10 minutes of observation if necessary).2 HCW hand hygiene may improve when HCWs are aware of being observed,3 but it is unclear whether this reactivity increases or decreases over time or introduces systematic bias. Short periods of observation may not reflect 24-hour, 7-days-per-week behavior.4 In addition, short observation periods may not provide enough observations to meet previously identified criteria for interobserver reliability, because compliance levels differ between observers by over 10% if less than 15 hand hygiene moments are observed.4 To our knowledge, no study has investigated whether there are significant differences between compliance recorded over 20 minutes, 1 hour, or longer. This study aimed to investigate whether compliance in the first 20 minutes or the first hour differed substantially from that observed over 4 hours. Findings informed the choice of the optimal observation period for a randomized controlled trial of a hand hygiene intervention (the Feedback Intervention Trial [FIT]; ISRCTN65246961).5

Observations were performed using a validated tool6 by 1 of 3 observers, who were trained as described elsewhere.6 Fifty-three 4-hour covert observation sessions (from 1000 to 1200 hours and from 1300 to 1500 hours) were performed from October 2006 through January 2007 on 13 intensive therapy units (ITUs) and 36 wards providing acute care to elderly patients (ACES) at 13 hospitals across England and Wales during the FIT baseline phase. Data were collected in 20-minute segments. Ethical permission was obtained (05/MREC10/2).

Hour-to-hour variation in compliance was examined by use of a mixed-effects logistic regression model with a binary outcome of HHC, including hospital and ward within hospital as random effects. Ward type (ITU or ACE) and sequential hourly observation period (first hour, second hour, third hour, and fourth hour) were included as fixed effects. A similar analysis examined variation in compliance over sequential 20-minute periods. Ward type was excluded after showing no evidence of effect on trend or compliance.

A total of 3,989 hand hygiene moments and associated behaviors were observed. Overall compliance was 75%.

For sequential hour periods (Table 1), compliance was lowest in the first hour (71%), and the estimated odds ratios (ORs) for compliance increased significantly (OR [95% confidence interval [CI]], 1.32 [1.08–1.61]; *P* = .007) in the second hour and remained stable thereafter.

For sequential 20-minute periods (Table 1), compliance was lowest (69%) in the first 20 minutes, with the estimated ORs increasing significantly in the second 20-minute period (OR [95% CI], 1.42 [1.02–1.96]; *P* = .04), although not in the third 20-minute period. ORs then increased and remained stable from the fourth period onwards, although there was fluctuation between the last three 20-minute segments.

Compliance was slightly but significantly lower in the first hour of a 4-hour observation period. The odds of compliance increased significantly in the second hour and remained stable thereafter. This was reflected in the measurement of compliance in 20-minute sequences, where compliance was lowest in the first 20 minutes.

No earlier study has broken observation periods down into such discrete sequences. Study strengths include size, geographical spread, variety of patient groups, and use of a standardized tool. Results are probably representative of English and Welsh practice and generalizable to acute care hospitals. Limitations of our study include the use of a convenience sample of wards and difficulties ensuring that observation was entirely covert.