Discovering the Clinical and Financial Value of Sanitized Devices

Contaminated IT devices at hospitals can lead to serious infectious diseases, hence healthcare organizations need equipment that can be cleaned and disinfected properly.

Image: HP EliteOne 800 G5 23.8 Healthcare Edition All-in-One Business PC mounted on a Healthcare Ergotron Cart with HP Healthcare Keyboard and Mouse
Risks of nosocomial infection

When people are admitted to the hospital, they want to get better, but all too often they wind up worse for wear. On any given day, about 1 in 31 hospitalized patients have at least one Health-Associated Infection (HAI). Altogether, about 687,000 patients acquired infections while being treated in acute care hospitals in the U.S. in 2015—and about 72,000 of these patients died.¹

Such statistics are certainly not acceptable from a clinical perspective. The concern becomes even more pressing, though, as healthcare organizations adopt value-based care models, where reimbursement is based on the quality of care achieved, not merely the volume of services delivered. Under these models, the financial stakes for provider organizations stretch beyond the dollars required to treat HAIs—a total that is estimated to cost the industry $9.78 billion for the five most common types.² Indeed, healthcare organizations need to consider that they will now experience reductions in payment as well. Medicare, for example, is reducing by about $350 million annually than what it pays to the hospitals that rank worst among other hospitals for how often their patients get HAIs.³

In addition, patients are more engaged with their care and understand they have a choice when it comes to finding a hospital for their care. Because patients can now access social media and websites that provide information on each hospital’s mortality and infection rates, healthcare organizations can suffer financially if they are not delivering high quality care.

“In this age of value-based care, hospitals need to demonstrate to both payers and consumers that they are providing great care at lower cost and, perhaps most importantly, that they are producing the best outcomes for patients,” said Raja Bhadury, HP Global Lead for Enterprise Healthcare.
How to reduce this risk?

The challenge is to look for each and every way to reduce the risk of nosocomial infection. And that means clinical and healthcare IT leaders can no longer ignore the potential risk of infection from contaminated laptops, smartphones, and other devices. Consider the following: Researchers have discovered that computer keyboards contained 7,500 bacteria per swab—more than an average toilet seat. In addition, a study published in Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology found two or more types of microorganisms on all the computer keyboards tested in the burn intensive care unit, cardiothoracic intensive care unit, and six nursing units at the University of North Carolina Health Care System.

Melinda Schmidt, RN, knows all too well that these contaminated devices can lead to serious infectious diseases. When working in a hospital, Schmidt continued to document patient progress on a computer after getting a paper cut on her finger. Shortly thereafter, she contracted Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA). “I waited a short time for the surgical skin glue to be delivered but within that timeframe, I had already been infected with MRSA. The only time I did not have gloves on was when I was charting, and for three weeks, I had a PICC line and received Vancomycin and Cubicin twice a day. To this day, 15 years later, I still have to monitor my kidney functions,” she said.

Many of the computers and devices are simply not designed to be cleaned with effective agents such as bleach or quaternary ammonium formulations. Healthcare organizations need to work with equipment that can be cleaned and disinfected properly, such as HP’s Healthcare Editions devices.
Healthcare organizations, however, need to work with equipment that can be cleaned and disinfected properly, such as HP’s Healthcare Editions devices. “Cleaning means you’re removing the visible dirt and possibly the not-so-dangerous pathogens. But the cloths and alcohol wipes don’t really get rid of the other more deadly pathogens,” Schmidt said. “You need to work with IT equipment that can handle the more abrasive germicidal wipes to actually disinfect the surface and get rid of those more dangerous pathogens.”

To ensure this happens, “…healthcare organizations need appropriate protocols in place so that the cleaning and disinfection of IT devices becomes an important component of environmental hygiene and eliminates a potential source of pathogen transmission,” Bhadury concluded. “Infection preventionists, nursing, and environmental services staff must collaborate closely to decide who is responsible for the routine cleaning and disinfection, and that the appropriate staff members are trained to follow the protocols.”

References


