

CHILD HEALTH PATIENT SAFETY ORGANIZATION

Patient Safety Action Alert

April 2014



A Patient Experienced a SERIOUS SAFETY EVENT

Take Action to Reduce Risk of Similar Harm

Event: Cutaneous Fungal Outbreak Associated with Hospital Linens

Target Audience: Infection Prevention, Quality, Patient Safety, Legal, Risk Management, Cause Analysis Staff, Organizational Leaders, Nursing and Clinical Leaders, Supply Chain Services, Environmental Services

Resultant Harm to the Patient: Five critically-ill patients with hospital-associated Mucormycosis, specifically *Rhizopus*, all subsequently expired.

Fundamental Issue: Cutaneous Mucormycosis, in these cases *Rhizopus*, is an invasive, rapidly spreading fungal infection which usually occurs in often terminal patients whose suppressed immune system cannot fight off the infection. Upon recognition, the Office of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) was contacted to assist in the investigation. The investigation revealed this fungus is common in dirt and soil and hospital linens were identified as the likely source of the infection, with contamination occurring possibly during transport. According to the CDC this is the first and only incident of linens transmitting *Rhizopus*.

Actions to Mitigate Risk of Similar Harm at Your Hospital

- Skin assessment should be performed on a regular basis on all immobile, at-risk patients, which include patients with diabetes, prematurity/low birth weight, metabolic acidosis, immunocompromised, and/or renal failure. Consider steam-sterilized linens for at-risk patients.
- Hospital linens should be laundered and covered in a manner that reduces environmental exposure to dust and dirt during transport.
- Consider site visits to linen service facilities. Obtain and monitor quality assurance records.
- Review the location of the linen loading area, especially during construction.
- Monitor linen storage sites during Environment of Care rounds to ensure linen is clean and dust free.

Has a patient experienced an event at your organization that could happen in another hospital?

- Child Health PSO members submit event details into the [Child Health PSO portal](#).
- Contact Child Health PSO staff to share risks, issues to assess, and mitigation strategies with member hospitals.
- Forty children's hospitals are actively engaged with Child Health PSO. We currently are enrolling new members.

What can I do with this Alert?

- Forward this Alert to the recommended target audience for evaluation.
- Include in your Daily Safety Brief.
- Create loop-closing process for evaluating risks and strategies implemented to decrease risk of repeat harm.
- Let Child Health PSO know what is working and what additional information you need.

Leverage your PSO membership: Learn from each other to reduce patient harm and Serious Safety Events

Contact Us

psosupport@childpso.org

This Alert is approved for general distribution to improve pediatric safety and reduce patient harm. This Alert meets the standards of non-identification in accordance with 3.212 of the Patient Safety Quality Improvement Act (PSQIA) and is a permissible disclosure by Child Health PSO.