



Deadly yet easily preventable bloodstream infections continue to plague American hospitals because facility administrators fail to commit resources and attention to the problem, according to a survey of medical professionals released Monday.

An estimated 80,000 patients per year develop catheter-related bloodstream infections, or CRBSIs -- which can occur when tubes are inserted into a vein to monitor blood flow or deliver medication and nutrients are improperly prepared or left in longer than necessary. About 30,000 patients die as a result, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accounting for nearly a third of annual deaths due to hospital-acquired infections in the United States.

Yet evidence suggests hospital workers could all but eliminate CRBSIs by following a five-step checklist that is stunningly basic: (1) Wash hands with soap; (2) clean patient's skin with an effective antiseptic; (3) put sterile drapes over the entire patient; (4) wear a sterile mask, hat, gown and gloves; (5) put a sterile dressing over the catheter site.

The approach also calls for clinicians to continually reconsider whether the benefits of keeping the catheter in for another day outweigh the risks, and to use electronic monitoring systems that allow them to spot infections quickly and assemble a rapid response team to treat them.

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