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Targeted versus Universal Decolonization to Prevent ICU Infection

Susan S. Huang, M.D., M.P.H., Edward Septimus, M.D., Ken Kleinman, Sc.D., Julia Moody, M.S., Jason Hickok, M.B.A., R.N., Taliser R. Avery, M.S., Julie Lankiewicz, M.P.H., Adrijana Gombosov, B.S., Leah Terpstra, B.A., Fallon Hartford, M.S., Mary K. Hayden, M.D., John A. Jernigan, M.D., Robert A. Weinstein, M.D., Victoria J. Fraser, M.D., Katherine Haffenreffer, B.S., Eric Cui, B.S., Rebecca E. Kaganov, B.A., Karen Lolans, B.S., Jonathan B. Perlin, M.D., Ph.D., and Richard Platt, M.D., for the CDC Prevention Epicenters Program and the AHRQ DECIDE Network and Healthcare-Associated Infections Program*

ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND

Both targeted decolonization and universal decolonization of patients in intensive care units (ICUs) are candidate strategies to prevent health care-associated infections, particularly those caused by methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA).

METHODS

We conducted a pragmatic, cluster-randomized trial. Hospitals were randomly assigned to one of three strategies, with all adult ICUs in a given hospital assigned to the same strategy. Group 1 implemented MRSA screening and isolation; group 2, targeted decolonization (i.e., screening, isolation, and decolonization of MRSA carriers); and group 3, universal decolonization (i.e., no screening, and decolonization of all patients). Proportional-hazards models were used to assess differences in infection reductions across the study groups, with clustering according to hospital.

RESULTS

A total of 43 hospitals (including 74 ICUs and 74,256 patients during the intervention period) underwent randomization. In the intervention period versus the baseline period, modeled hazard ratios for MRSA clinical isolates were 0.92 for screening and isolation (crude rate, 3.2 vs. 3.4 isolates per 1000 days), 0.75 for targeted decolonization (3.2 vs. 4.3 isolates per 1000 days), and 0.63 for universal decolonization (2.1 vs. 3.4 isolates per 1000 days) ($P=0.01$ for test of all groups being equal). In the intervention versus baseline periods, hazard ratios for bloodstream infection with any pathogen in the three groups were 0.99 (crude rate, 4.1 vs. 4.2 infections per 1000 days), 0.78 (3.7 vs. 4.8 infections per 1000 days), and 0.56 (3.6 vs. 6.1 infections per 1000 days), respectively ($P<0.001$ for test of all groups being equal). Universal decolonization resulted in a significantly greater reduction in the rate of all bloodstream infections than either targeted decolonization or screening and isolation. One bloodstream infection was prevented per 54 patients who underwent decolonization. The reductions in rates of MRSA bloodstream infection were similar to those of all bloodstream infections, but the difference was not significant. Adverse events, which occurred in 7 patients, were mild and related to chlorhexidine.

CONCLUSIONS

In routine ICU practice, universal decolonization was more effective than targeted decolonization or screening and isolation in reducing rates of MRSA clinical isolates and bloodstream infection from any pathogen. (Funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; REDUCE MRSA ClinicalTrials.gov number, NCT00980980.)

From the University of California Irvine School of Medicine, Orange (S.S.H., A.G., L.T., E.C.); Hospital Corporation of America, Houston (E.S.) and Nashville (J.M., J.H., J.B.P.); Texas A&M Health Science Center, Houston (E.S.); Harvard Medical School and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Institute, Boston (K.K., T.R.A., J.L., F.H., K.H., R.E.K., R.P.); Rush Medical College (M.K.H., K.L.) and John Stroger Hospital of Cook County (R.A.W.), Chicago; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta (J.A.J.); and Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis (V.J.F.). Address reprint requests to Dr. Huang at the Division of Infectious Diseases and Health Policy Research Institute, University of California Irvine School of Medicine, 101 City Dr., City Tower Suite 400, ZC 4081, Orange, CA 92868, or at sshuang@uci.edu.

*Investigators for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Prevention Epicenters Program and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Developing Evidence to Inform Decisions about Effectiveness (DECIDE) Network and Healthcare-Associated Infections Program are listed in the Supplementary Appendix, available at NEJM.org.

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