

Containing super bugs in health centers in El Salvador

A national initiative has created awareness of an existing problem and defined strategies for its containment



*Workshop participants learning on adequate care of respiratory devices - I National Conference on Prevention and Control of Hospital Infections. San Salvador, El Salvador. **Clean hands are vital in the prevention of ventilator-associated pneumonia.***

Multidrug resistant bacteria are also called "super bugs" since they represent an extraordinary potential for untreatable infection. Super bugs increase mortality, morbidity, and prevalence/incidence of disease. These resistant strains can spread rapidly in health care settings, where immunocompromised hosts and debilitated patients are located. In addition to the direct impact on mortality, economic consequences are also remarkable, especially in resource-constrained settings. National authorities in El Salvador were amazed by the high economic burden of the ventilator-associated pneumonia and catheter-associated infections, which account for 14% of the annual hospital budget.

To tackle the spread of resistant pathogens, widespread implementation of adequate infection control practices among health care workers is urgent. After the conformation of a National Inter-Hospital Committee on Prevention and Control of Health Care Associated Infections, a national conference was organized around this topic.

During this First National Conference on Prevention and Control of Hospital Infections (San Salvador, November 2008), a number of training workshops organized by PAHO with the support of USAID were held. Selected facilitators covered "Strategies to Prevent Catheter-Associated Blood Stream Infections", "Basic practices to prevent ventilator-associated pneumonia" and "Hand hygiene techniques". More than 150 people actively participated in the workshops. The National Inter-Hospital Committee is in charge of follow up activities with the participating hospitals and universities in order to strength the implementation of adequate practices among future health care professionals.



Manual "Prevention and Control of Infections in Health Services". SAIDI - PAHO. Bolivia. Display at the Congress.

In addition, the strategy "Infections: the solution is in your hands" was launched during the conference's opening ceremony. This strategy was originally defined and successfully implemented in Bolivia, under the South America Infectious Disease Initiative (SAIDI), also funded by USAID. Materials and technical documents were brought from Bolivia, and experts introduced the strategy and shared experiences with conference participants. This activity validated the efficacy of South-South cooperation, when countries share available resources, lessons learned and human expertise.