



Leading Medical Microbiologist Professor Mark Wilcox to present his latest study at Infection Prevention Society Conference 2018

Multisite study across three countries explores impact of hand drying method on contamination and bacteria levels in hospital toilets

Brussels, Belgium – 20 September, 2018 – Professor Mark Wilcox, MD, consultant microbiologist and Head of R&D in Microbiology at the University of Leeds and Leeds Teaching Hospitals, will present a Symposium entitled '***Is the choice of hand drying method a decision for infection control teams rather than facilities?***' at the prestigious Infection Prevention Society ([IPS](#)) 2018 Conference being held at the Scottish Event Campus, Glasgow from 30 September – 2 October.

Now in its 11th year, the IPS Conference gathers leading experts from across Europe and beyond. Professor Wilcox's 30-minute presentation is based on the multicentre study he led in France, Italy and UK, exploring the prevalence of environmental contamination – including by antibiotic resistant bacteria - in hospital toilets used by visitors, staff and patients according to two hand drying methods: paper towels and jet air dryers. It will take place on Monday 1st October from 12.55 – 13.25 in the Boisdale room.

Laboratory and in situ studies have demonstrated that some hand drying methods are associated with a greater risk of dissemination of residual microbes from hands after (especially suboptimal) handwashing. In this latest study, supported by a grant from ETS, two toilets per hospital were observed – each had paper towel dispensers and jet air hand dryers, but only one of these was available to use at any given time – the hand drying method was changed every 4 weeks. The toilets were frequented by patients, visitors and staff. Bacterial contamination levels were measured over 12 weeks. Target bacteria included methicillin susceptible (MSSA) and resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), enterococci and enterobacteria, including ESBL (extended-spectrum β -lactamase) bacteria. For full details of methodology click [here](#).

Higher levels of contamination were measured in toilets using a jet air dryer compared with those using paper towels. There were multiple examples of significant differences in the extent of surface bacterial contamination, including by faecal associated (enterococci and enterobacteria) and antibiotic resistant bacteria (MRSA and ESBL-producing bacteria). The study demonstrated that hand drying method can affect the risk of airborne dissemination of bacteria in real world settings. They should be of particular interest to infection prevention and control doctors and nurses, procurement managers and all responsible for minimising the spread of cross-infection in hospitals.

Commenting on the study he led, Professor Wilcox said, "Hand hygiene is one of the most important components of infection prevention and these findings have serious implications for minimising the spread of bacteria including MRSA, enterobacteria and enterococci in hospital toilets."

Ends



Note to editors – Professor Wilcox Biography

Prof. Mark Wilcox is a consultant microbiologist and the Head of Research and Development in Microbiology at the Leeds Teaching Hospitals (LTHT), Professor of Medical Microbiology at the University of Leeds, and Lead on Clostridium difficile for Public Health England (PHE).

He serves in numerous advisory roles including as a medical advisor to National Infection Prevention & Control Lead (NHS Improvement), England, the Medical Research Council's Infection and Immunity Panel, and he is Chair of PHE's Rapid Review Panel (reviews the utility of infection prevention & control products for the NHS) and Deputy Chair of the Department of Health's Antimicrobial Prescribing and Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infection committee (APRHAI).

He was formerly the Director of Infection Prevention (4 years), Infection Control Doctor (8 years), and Clinical Director of Pathology (6 years) at LTHT and Head of Microbiology (15 years).

Prof Wilcox leads a Healthcare Associated Infection Research Group at the University of Leeds, comprising ~30 doctors, scientists and nurses.

About ETS

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