The New #1 Hospital-Acquired Infection and How to Prevent It
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Summary: Hospital-acquired pneumonia (HAP) is the most common hospital-acquired infection (HAI) in U.S. hospitals, tied with surgical site infections, per the CDC Point-Prevalence Survey published in 2014. 22% of all HAIs are HAP and greater than 60% of those are attributed to Nonventilator HAP (NV-HAP), a preventable infection that is not required to be measured or reported. NV-HAP occurs more often than Ventilator-Associated Pneumonia (VAP) with the same high mortality rate, thus costing more lives and dollars.

Nursing Implications:
• Nurses must begin to take ownership of prevention measures for all hospitalized patients, since all patients are at some risk for NV-HAP.
• Commonly missed nursing care, such as oral hygiene, may contribute to NV-HAP.
• It is important to engage the staff who deliver oral hygiene as well as other basic care in the improvement effort, including education, training, and feedback on performance.
• More nursing research is needed to correlate basic nursing care to positive patient outcomes.

Key Takeaways:
• NV-HAP is occurring in all hospitals and is costing patient lives and organizational dollars.
• NV-HAP occurs when pathogens in the oropharyngeal cavity are micro-aspirated into the lower respiratory tract of a patient with low resistance to infection.
• All patients in the hospital are at some risk for pneumonia; this occurs on all types of hospital units.
• NV-HAP can be prevented with basic medical surgical nursing care; no provider orders required.

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References:
Quinn et. al. (2014). Basic Nursing Care to Prevent Nonventilator Hospital-Acquired Pneumonia. Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 45 (1), 11-19.

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