CREATING CULTURAL & MANAGEMENT SUPPORT FOR AUTOMATED HAND HYGIENE SYSTEMS

BY KEVIN WITTRUP

BIOVIGIL®

Executive Summary

Automated hand-hygiene compliance (HHC) systems are an effective and efficient way to support goals that every hospital has: improving patient satisfaction and quality while reducing infections, liability, and cost. However, the implementation of an automated HHC system can present significant internal cultural and management challenges. This white paper reviews objectives of implementation and associated best practices for overcoming associated challenges.

Objective #1

Addressing "big brother" concerns and resistance to adoption by staff members

Objective #2

Sustaining long-term focus and commitment to automated HHC

Objective #3

Integrating with existing clinical workflows

Objective #1: Addressing "big brother" concerns and resistance to adoption by staff members

Staff objections to anything perceived as a monitoring program are not unique to automated HHC systems. What can be unique is the high volume of hand hygiene opportunities (HHOs) that the systems are monitoring on a daily basis (more than 10,000 per day in an average hospital) along with the significant level of discretion that health care workers typically exercise in determining if a hand hygiene event is necessary in the context of a particular situation. Staff are likely to have rational concerns about how the data will be used and even fear that they will be unfairly punished. Furthermore, staff can feel overburdened by "just one more thing to do" in an environment where providing care to the patient is the primary objective.

Best practices for achieving end-user adoption (and even enthusiasm):

➤ **Focus on the positive.**
Rather than focusing solely on compliance as a desired objective, maintain an emphasis on patient safety and reinforce that an HHC system provides tremendous reassurance to patients and family members. This approach can subtly shift the perception away from a punitive, "blame and shame" monitoring device toward a tool that helps to reassure and protect patients.

➤ **Position HHC system as a tool that relies on users' professionalism, cooperation, and empowerment, not an "enforcement" device.**
No system can anticipate every circumstance encountered by a care provider in the normal course of care, and users need to be empowered to exercise professional discretion without fear of unfair reprisal.

➤ **Set clear expectations and proactively explain what data is being collected and how it will be used.**
Tell users exactly what is expected of them, how favorable behaviors will be rewarded, and how unfavorable behaviors will be addressed. Initially, a liberal approach

that emphasizes reward and education versus penalties and punishment is recommended, and requirements can be elevated over time as users acclimate to the system.

➤ **Demonstrate enthusiastic sponsorship and commitment from both clinical and nonclinical leadership.**
If automated HHC is viewed as a trial or an experiment, or if influential managers/leaders are less than fully committed to the effort, users are less likely to participate and sustain the program.

Objective #2: Sustaining long-term focus and commitment to automated HHC

After the focus and energy surrounding initial implementation has subsided, it is important to demonstrate sustained commitment to the HHC program to maximize beneficial outcomes and maintain usage. Engagement can quickly fall off when attention shifts to the next clinical initiative if the HHC system has not become an integral part of the management routine.

Best practices for achieving and sustaining HHC goals:

➤ **Assign a qualified point-of-care champion, but demonstrate clear executive leadership and commitment.**
With the endorsement of both executive leadership and nursing, this champion will serve as the focal point for the effort, maintain visibility, support nursing, and manage the data resulting from your automated HHC system across all units and users. It is also important to consistently reinforce that executives are regularly reviewing the data and driving expectations and interest in the program.

➤ **Use the data (and make it visible). A good automated HHC system will generate data that can yield actionable information regarding clinical workflows and behaviors.**
Using and sharing the data on a regular basis to show progress, celebrate success, and highlight opportunities for improvement is an effective way to integrate the system into the normal management routine.

➤ **Implement a reward program.**
A data-driven reward program is a good way to maintain interest while incentivizing desirable behaviors.

➤ **Market the HHC program to patients and their families.**
Frequent patient turnover provides an opportunity to promote your hospital's commitment to patient safety and quality of care as demonstrated by an HHC system. Prominent signage, proactive marketing to patients, and an HHC system with visible reminder and reassurance functions provide a patient-driven incentive for caregivers to sustain usage and performance.

➤ **Avoid over-burdening unit-level leadership, particularly nursing managers.**
Since nursing managers are on the front lines of HHC, their support, commitment, and energy is critical for success. Although vital, HHC is only one of many responsibilities with which floor-level managers are tasked. Unit-managers are ultimately responsible for managing the accountability of their staff, but point-of-care champions should support them to minimize the additional effort associated with sustaining the HHC program, analyzing data, etc.

Objective #3: Integrating with existing clinical workflows

A good automated HHC system can accurately record when care providers enter or leave a room and when they perform hand hygiene, but no system knows the particular circumstances accompanying each HHO. A system needs to integrate with existing workflows so that extra steps aren't added unnecessarily, and it also needs to be flexible enough to accommodate exceptions so that users do not feel they are being unfairly charged with noncompliant HHOs. In most cases, *an automated HHC system should not change policies; it should support policies that are already in place.*

Best practices for automating HHC without impacting workflow:

➤ **Avoid forcing workflow changes simply to support HHC system capabilities.**
In some cases, workflow changes are a desired outcome of an automated HHC system, but it is usually undesirable to force unnecessary changes.

➤ **Embrace user empowerment and acknowledge professionalism.**
Because the system cannot be perfect, it should not be implemented as an authoritarian monitoring tool and a generous level of user empowerment is recommended. The system should allow users to interact with it and override the system when appropriate in their professional determination. The data will usually identify users who take unfair advantage of this flexibility over time.

➤ **Be flexible.**
An HHC system should be flexible to adapt to unique workflows based on room layout, patient acuity, unit demands, and other factors. Allowing users to participate in this fine-tuning process and responding to changing conditions and user feedback can facilitate their support.

Conclusion

Automated HHC is becoming the standard of care in the United States, and it is possible to implement a system in a way that can achieve broad cultural and management adoption, both of which are critical for success. In fact, when coupled with strong leadership and a sustained culture of accountability, an electronic HHC system is a powerful tool to drive high levels of HHC and a visible focus on patient safety throughout the organization.

About BioVigil

BioVigil is the market leader in hand hygiene solutions. Headquartered in Ann Arbor, MI, BioVigil's patented technology enables hospitals to sustain 97% hand hygiene compliance and reduce Healthcare Acquired Infections with a gentle reminder system that increases patient engagement. At the center of the solution is BioVigil's Data Suite which delivers actionable insights for hospitals to optimize workflow. These insights are available on demand or in easy to understand reports.

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