

Selection and Management (Maintenance, Handling, and Cleaning) of Isolation Carts

Best Practice Recommendations

Objectives

The purpose of this recommendation is to provide consistent Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) information for the selection and management of isolation carts, to ensure they are appropriate for use within AHS and are used by AHS staff in a way that prevents contamination of the supplies, to reduce the risk of transmitting microorganisms while caring for patients on additional precautions (isolation).

Applicability

Section A of this guideline is to be used by infection control professionals (ICP), Contracting, Procurement, and Supply Management (CPSM) staff, and others in AHS when assessing isolation carts for purchase. Section B is to be used by infection control professionals, Environmental Services staff, clinical staff and others in AHS when using isolation carts while caring for patients on additional precautions.

A. Selection Recommendations

1. Choose commercially manufactured isolation carts that have cleaning instructions from the manufacturer that:

- are mobile
- have smooth surfaces
- have solid, non-shedding, non-porous shelving or drawers
- are easy to clean
- can be cleaned with an AHS approved disinfectant

Do not choose isolation caddies, which are usually made of material that cannot be laundered and hung on the patient door. Caddies are not preferred because they are made of nylon or other material that cannot be wiped if soiled; instead, they would have to be emptied of all supplies, and then sent to Linen Services to be laundered.

2. Do not repurpose other equipment for use as an isolation cart unless:

- all the criteria in this guideline are met and in consultation with IPC
- the repurposed item is in good repair with no damage to surfaces

3. Choose carts that have adequate storage space for personal protective equipment and prevent contamination of this equipment.

4. Choose carts that can hold the following:

- Variety of sizes of gloves appropriate to the Additional Precautions implemented
- Gowns
- Masks appropriate to the Additional Precautions implemented
- Eye protection (consider size, e.g., full face shields, goggles)

Carts may also hold:

- AHS-approved alcohol-based Hand Rub (ABHR)
- AHS-approved disinfectant wipes
- Isolation signs and Donning/Doffing Posters

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5. Consult with WHS and FME regarding staff safety and structural requirements and regulations (e.g., placement of isolation carts in hallways/corridors; possible height restrictions, etc.).

B. Management Recommendations

1. Consult with Workplace Health and Safety or the fire marshal about placement of the isolation cart and whether placement in the corridor outside the room interferes with fire code or other WHS criteria. If placing the cart outside the patient room door is not allowed, then place just inside the door. Ensure the cart is not within two metres of the patient space.
2. Clean hands before accessing supplies on the isolation cart.
3. Only place items required for additional precautions on the cart, that is, appropriate PPE and ABHR. (Inappropriate items include water bottles, lab samples, paperwork, etc.)
4. Stock only enough supplies on the cart for each instance of additional precautions.
5. Place a cleanable (i.e. laminated) checklist for supplies on the cart to aid in stocking the cart.
6. Do not refill or top-up boxes and dispensers (e.g., gloves boxes ABHR dispensers, etc).
7. If carts are in short supply, units may share one cart between two rooms.
8. If the additional precautions room has an anteroom, store PPE supplies in the anteroom, if adequate space is available. If there is a hand hygiene sink in the anteroom, keep supplies in closed cabinets or out of splash zones.
9. Clean carts according to cart manufacturer's instructions, at least weekly while in use, between patients, or if visibly soiled. Discard any supplies that are visibly soiled.
10. Designate responsibility to clean and disinfect cart according to site protocols.
11. Store clean isolation carts in an area designated for clean equipment, when not in use. If the cart is not stored in a designated clean equipment area, it must be covered.

Definitions

Disinfectant : A chemical agent that kills most disease-producing microorganisms, but not necessarily resistant bacterial spores

References

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