Asepsis – The Foundation of Infection Control Practices
Sue Crow, Louisiana State University Health Care Centre
A Webber Training Teleclass

Asepsis
The Foundation of Infection Control Practices
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Hosted by Paul Webber
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Nosocomial Infections Facts
- Nosocomial infections continue to occur in all health care settings
- The risk of nosocomial infections can be reduced simply by understanding and practicing aseptic technique
- Health care personnel have a moral obligation to be the patients advocate
- Microbes are invisible, consequently you must see microbes with your mind’s eye
- Man is a natural reservoir for microbes
- All microbes can be a source of infection
- A conscious careful attitude is imperative

Definition of Asepsis
Reducing the number of microbes to an irreducible number
The purposeful prevention of the transfer of microbes from one person to another
Sum total of the effort to keep the patient’s environment free from contamination and the patient free from colonization

The principles of asepsis are based on rational thinking and on a strong theoretical and empirical rationale.

In a nutshell it is common sense!

Infectious Disease Theory
Source
- method of transmission
  + susceptible host

= INFECTION

Cornerstones of Medical Asepsis
* Know what is dirty
* Know what is clean
* Know what is sterile
* Keep these conditions separate
* Remedy contamination immediately

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### Principles of Medical Asepsis

When the body is penetrated, and natural barriers such as the skin is bypassed, the patient is susceptible to any microbes that might enter.

### Principles of medical asepsis

Even though intact skin is a good barrier against microbial contamination, a patient can become colonized with microbes if appropriate precautions are not taken.

### Principles of medical asepsis

All body fluids from any patient is considered contaminated.

### Principles of medical asepsis

The healthcare team and the environment can be a source of contamination for the patient.

### Hand Washing: The Substance of Asepsis

**Handwashing**

Is the single most important procedure for preventing nosocomial infection.

- When & how
  - Soap or antiseptics
  - The use of gloves
Other Principles of Medical Asepsis

Assess each patient to determine if he has an infectious process
Choose the barrier appropriate to the infectious process
Isolate the disease not the patient.
The chain is as strong as the weakest link

Antiseptic Characteristics

Rapid reduction of flora
Wide range of killing power
Absence of absorption across skin/mucous membranes
Know the appropriate dilution

Surgical Principles of Asepsis

Know what is sterile
Know what is not sterile
Keep the two apart
Remedy contamination immediately

Other Principles of Medical Asepsis

Antiseptic--agent used to kill or inhibit skin microbes
Disinfectant-agent used to kill or inhibit environmental microbes
Antiseptics are not disinfectants!!
Antiseptics and disinfectants should be used according to label

Surgical Principles of Asepsis

• The patient should not be a source of contamination
• The OR Team should not be a source of contamination- no infection- proper apparel, no jewelry, no long nails or nail polish
• The surgical scrub must be done meticulously
• The OR Technique of the surgeon is of utmost importance
• Recognize potential environmental contamination proper room cleaning, doors kept closed- no tacky mats

Surgery increases the risk of infection!
Define Sterility
• Gowns are considered sterile in front from chest high to the operative level
• Sterile persons should keep hands in sight and keep them at or above waist level
• Contamination occurs when sterile gown and drapes are permeated
• Tables are sterile only at the operative level

All instruments entering the sterile field must be sterile

Maintain Sterility
• All items used within the sterile field must be sterile
• Articles of doubtful sterility are considered unsterile
• Sterile persons touch only sterile items or sterile areas
• Unsterile personnel stay beyond one foot of the sterile field
• Every case is considered dirty and the same infections control precautions are taken for all patients

Remedy Contamination Immediately!!
• When contamination occurs, take care of it immediately
• Break in technique is pointed out and action is taken to change situation i.e. change gloves

To look is one thing
To see what you looked at is another
To understand what you see is a third
To learn from what you understand is still something else
But to act upon what you have leaned is what really matters

Asepsis……
the right touch

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