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CLINICAL SUMMARY

HAND HYGIENE IN HEALTHCARE: 20 YEARS OF ONGOING ADVANCES AND PERSPECTIVES

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BACKGROUND

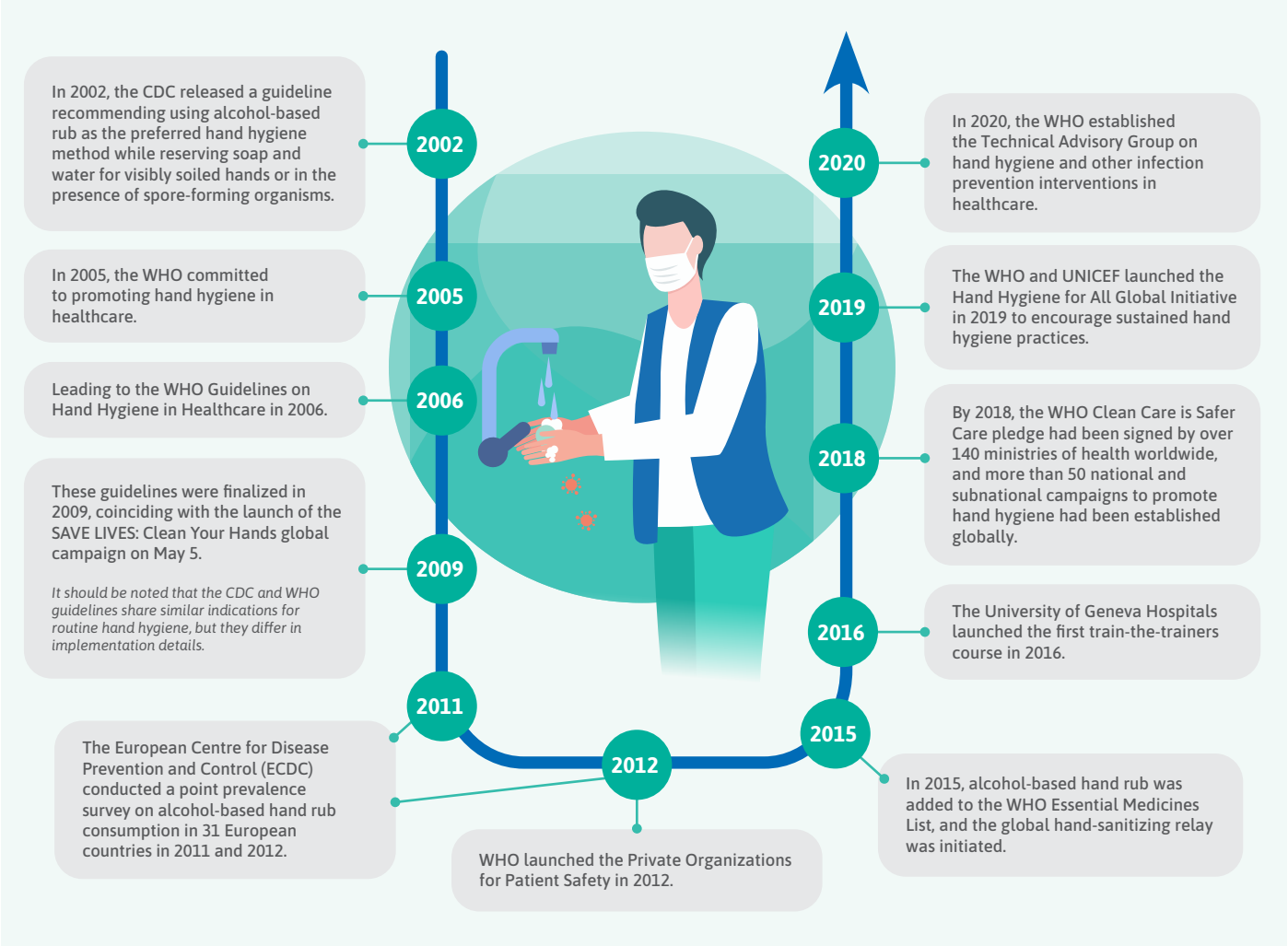
Healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) are mainly transmitted through the contaminated hands of healthcare workers, making hand hygiene a crucial aspect of infection control. Improvements in hand hygiene compliance have been associated with a reduction in HAIs, including multidrug-resistant organisms. Alcohol-based hand rubs have been the global standard of care for hand hygiene since the late 1990s, but compliance rates have been suboptimal worldwide. This review aims to assess progress made in the past two decades in improving hand hygiene compliance.

OBJECTIVE/METHODS

HAIs are a major concern in hospitals, causing significant morbidity and mortality among patients and imposing a heavy burden on society. The prevalence of HAIs is estimated to be 3.5-12% in high-income countries and 5.7-19.1% in low- and middle-income countries, although these estimates may be conservative due to under-reporting. According to reports, the hand hygiene compliance rate is, on average, 40% in high-income countries but less than 20% in low-income countries.

Improper glove use can create a false sense of protection and contribute to pathogen cross-contamination. Reusing gloves is strongly discouraged in healthcare facilities, and there is currently no standardized method for glove reprocessing. However, the rate of glove reuse is increasing, particularly in resource-limited settings or during health emergencies, which is cause for concern. Glove-wearing, though, is not intended to be a replacement for hand hygiene.

TIMELINE OF HAND HYGIENE LANDMARKS IN THE PAST TWO DECADES



CONCLUSION

Since the publication of the first hand hygiene review in The Lancet Infectious Diseases in 2001, significant progress has been made in addressing the proposed research questions. Over half of the issues surrounding hand hygiene education, preferred hand hygiene solution, and laboratory-based research discussed in 2001 have been resolved or better understood. However, new challenges continue to emerge, and the WHO's Technical Advisory Group is actively working to evaluate scientific aspects of hand hygiene and define a research agenda for the next five years. While alcohol-based hand rubs remain the cornerstone of infection prevention and control, misinformation surrounding their use can negatively impact compliance in healthcare and community settings. With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, hand hygiene has become more critical than ever before. Thus, it is important to provide equitable and global access to high-quality hand rubs and continue the implementation of a multimodal hand hygiene improvement strategy to achieve optimal compliance in healthcare.

APPLICATION FOR PRACTICE

1

Hand hygiene is a critical strategy to prevent the spread of HAIs

2

Gloves are disposables and medical glove use is regulated. Gloves cannot be washed, reprocessed or reused

3

May 5th is World Hand Hygiene Day. Join your colleagues in educating and reminding fellow HCWs about the importance of hand hygiene compliance to save lives

Note: This clinical summary is written by clinicians at Ansell Healthcare Products LLC. Please refer to the actual study for full text information.

Lotfinejad N, Peters A, Tartari E, et al., Hand hygiene in health care: 20 years of ongoing advances and perspectives published correction appears in Lancet Infect Dis. 2021;21(8): 209-221.

To read the study article: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34331890/

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