

# Clean Ears: Increasing Stethoscope Hygiene Compliance

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# Clean Ears: Increasing Stethoscope Hygiene Compliance

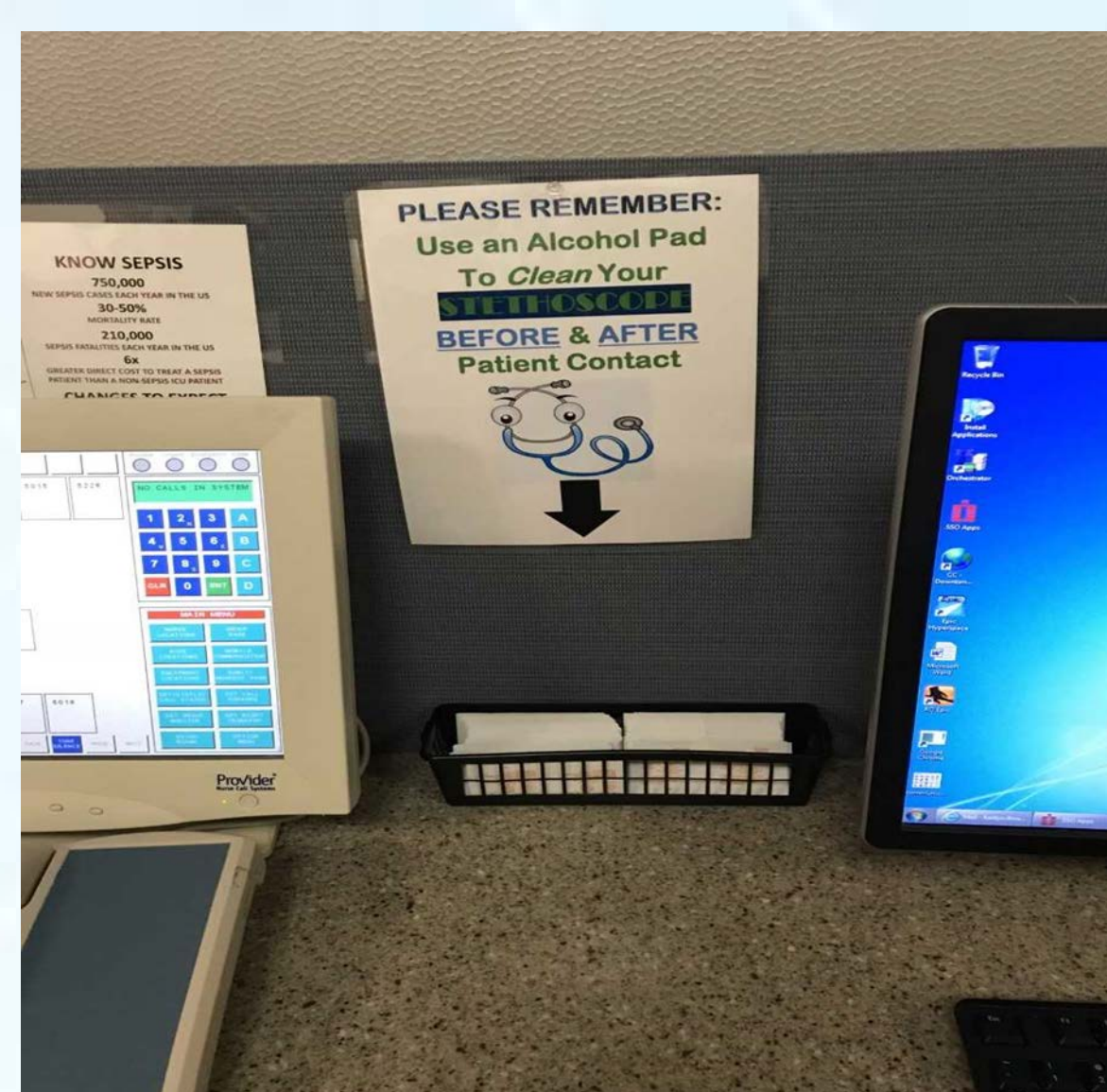
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- Research shows that stethoscopes are extensions of patient care providers' hands (Longtin, Y., et al., 2014).
- Hand hygiene scores on 5K and 6K dropped down to as low as 60% in 2018.
- After observing staff during patient care, it was noted that stethoscope hygiene compliance was low.
- Nurse Residents discovered a need for increased stethoscope hygiene compliance on 5K & 6K.

## Evidence

- “The contamination level of the stethoscope is substantial after a single physical examination and comparable to the contamination of parts of the
- Findings suggest that stethoscopes may be an under-appreciated vector for transmission of pathogens (Ravy K. Vajravelu, 2015).
- In one meta-analysis of 28 studies, the mean stethoscope contamination rate was 85.1% (O’Flaherty, N., 2015).
- Providing stethoscope disinfection supplies and visible reminders outside of patient rooms significantly increased stethoscope disinfection rates among physicians and nurses (Zaghi, J., 2013).



Stethoscope Station on Unit

**PLEASE REMEMBER:**  
Use an Alcohol Pad  
to Clean Your **STETHOSCOPE**  
**BEFORE & AFTER** Patient  
Contact

## REFERENCES

- Longtin, Y., et al., (2014). Contamination of stethoscopes and physicians' hands after a physical examination. *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, (89),3, 291-99.
- LVHN Infection Control Manual Policy- Isolation Precautions to Prevent Transmission of Infectious Agents
- O’Flaherty, N. (2015). The stethoscope and healthcare-associated infection. *Journal of Hospital Infection*, 91(1), 1-7.
- Vajravelu, R.K., et al. (2015). Evaluation of stethoscopes as vectors of clostridium difficile and methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus. *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology*, 33(1), 96-8.
- Zaghi, J., et al. (2013). Improving Stethoscope Disinfection at a Children’s Hospital. *Infection Control And Hospital Epidemiology*, 34 (11), 1189-93.

- 40 staff members who use stethoscopes during patient care were observed and/or asked about their stethoscope hygiene practice before and after patient contact in an effort to evaluate current stethoscope hygiene compliance on 5K & 6K.
- Met with unit Infection Control Practitioner (ICP) to review LVHN Infection Control policy, “Isolation Precautions to Prevent Transmission of Infectious Agents” to determine the correct method for stethoscope cleaning.
- After consultation with unit ICP, it was determined that one alcohol wipe should be used to clean a stethoscope before and after patient care.

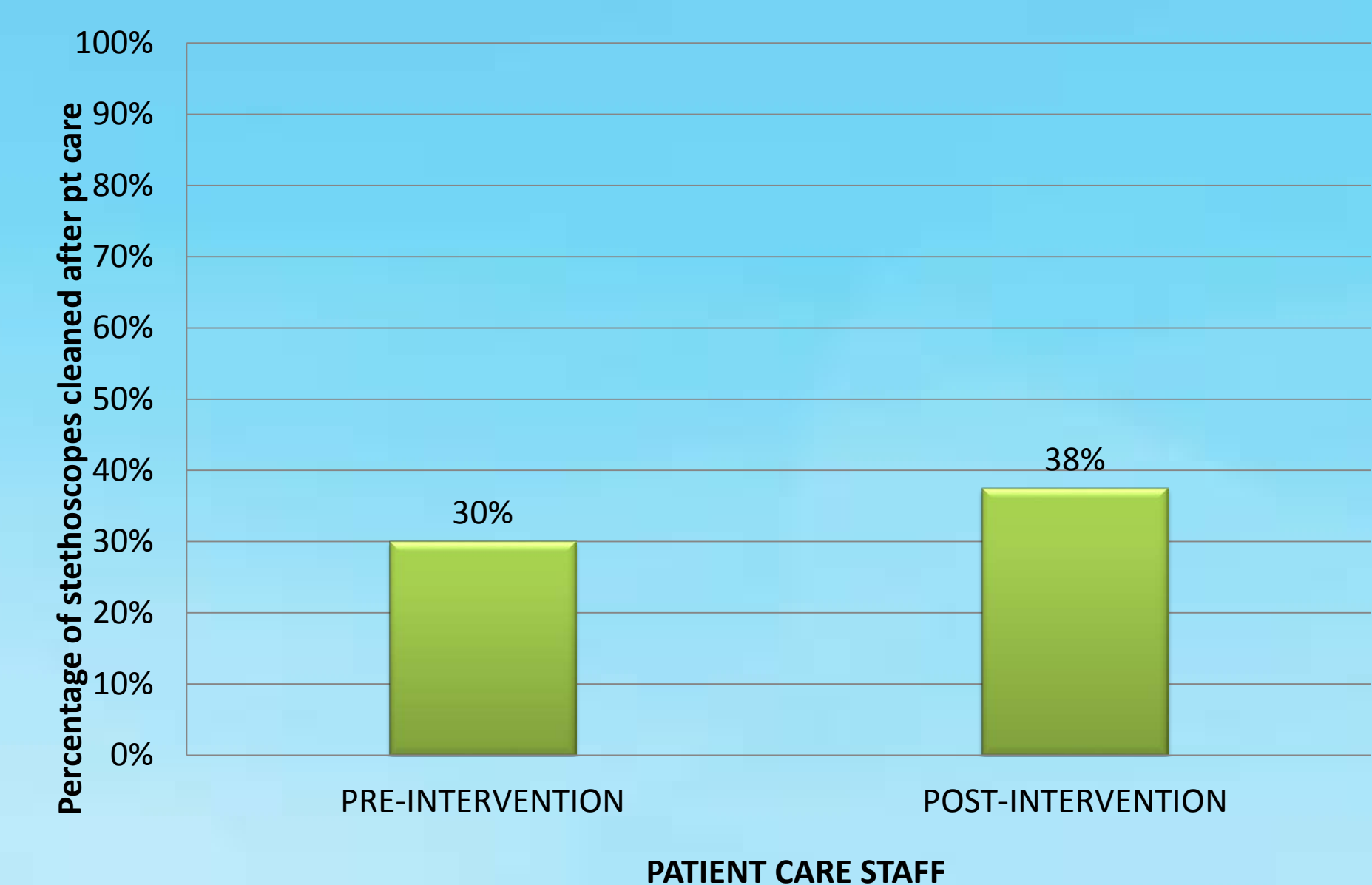
## Implementation

- “Stethoscope Hygiene Stations” – which included a basket of alcohol wipes with signs to remind staff when to clean stethoscopes – were placed at all 6 RN stations on 5 & 6K.
- Reminders to clean stethoscopes and to use stethoscope hygiene stations were discussed daily at evening huddle for two weeks in August.

## PICO

- P:** Registered Nurses and Technical Partners that use stethoscopes
- I:** Stethoscope hygiene stations and staff education
- C:** Observation of current stethoscope hygiene practices
- O:** Improved stethoscope hygiene compliance

## Stethoscope Hygiene Compliance



## Conclusions

- Stethoscope hygiene compliance on Med/Surg floors is low.
- Post-intervention compliance rate increased by 8%.
- The implementation of providing stethoscope hygiene stations with education is a low cost and low maintenance intervention to modestly increase stethoscope hygiene compliance on patient care units.

## Next Steps

- Keep stethoscope stations stocked on the unit.
- Bring data results to unit based practice council and discuss best ways to improve compliance.

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