Further episodes of excess chlorine in hospital water supplies

Two hospitals have independently reported incidents where excess levels of chlorine dioxide, used for water sterilisation, have been found in water supplies to renal units or intensive care units. The Patient Safety Project has reported previous episodes of haemolysis associated with increased concentrations of Hydrogen peroxide in a hospital water supply and chloramine in community water supplies.

In the two recent incidents of excess chlorine dioxide the maintenance of the water supplies was undertaken by a PFI company through sub-contractors. This raises issues not only about vigilance in monitoring the process of water sterilisation, but also of responsibilities for ensuring safety of hospital water supplies where PFI companies and subcontractors are involved with maintenance.

Action

- We advise that all hospitals and renal units again review their procedures for water standards and water sterilisation and to check whether they are in line with the RA and ART Guideline on Water Treatment Facilities, Dialysis Water and Dialysis Fluid Quality for Haemodialysis and Related Therapies


- We would welcome reports from renal units about any other incidents that have occurred with water sterilisation or other aspects of water standards, and particularly whether any such incidents were connected with the involvement of subcontractors.

- We would also welcome feedback about any incidents or risks that have occurred in other areas of clinical practice and which might have been related to PFI contractors or subcontractors.

Please submit comments, solutions, and personal experience to:

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