

Multidrug resistant superbugs: Infection control, prevention and the rational use of antibiotics in the ED

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The Australian National Safety and Quality Health Services Standards, released in 2012, include the prevention and control of healthcare associated infections. The criteria proposed to ensure that organisations can achieve this goal include; infection control, appropriate management of patients with infections or colonisations and antibiotic stewardship to control growing resistance.

Patients with infection are a significant cohort within the emergency department and as a result the ED is a significant consumer of antibiotics. Furthermore, treatment is empiric and informed by having a good understanding of the organisms common to the local community and the resistance patterns of these organisms. However, it is clear that antibiotic resistance remains a growing problem making it essential for ED clinicians to understand and participate in initiatives aimed at achieving the goals of this standard.

This paper will explore this standard, focusing on those criteria of most relevance to emergency departments, specifically; infection control, managing patients with infections or colonisations and antibiotic stewardship. Understanding antibiotic resistance and its impact on disease and antibiotic treatment is essential to achieving rational antibiotic use and this will be addressed in this paper.

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