



Media Release

Tuesday, 22 August 2017

New guidelines keep Australia ahead of superbug threat

The Gastroenterological Society of Australia has unveiled new guidelines to further bolster infection control in endoscopy, which aim to provide greater protection to patients from a multi-drug resistant bacterium linked to endoscopic procedures overseas.

The *Infection Control in Endoscopy Consensus Statement on carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae* establishes best practice in preventing carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) transmission, including advice on equipment reprocessing and storage.

Co-Chair of the multi-disciplinary Consensus Statements Committee, Associate Professor Benedict Devereaux stressed that endoscopic procedures are exceedingly safe and there have been no recorded cases of CPE linked to endoscopy in Australia.

The Consensus Statements specifically recommend the storage of endoscopic equipment in TGA-approved forced air-drying cabinets, which provide proven additional protection from bacterial biofilm. Endoscopes stored in these cabinets may be used for up to seven days without the need for reprocessing, or as stated by the manufacturer.

“The available evidence shows that adequate drying prevents bacterial overgrowth and that the constant flow of dry medical-grade air provides enhanced protection,” Assoc. Prof. Devereaux said.

The Consensus Statements note that while reported endoscopic transmission of CPE has been predominantly related to instruments with complex tips (e.g. duodenoscopes and linear echoendoscopes), all endoscopic instruments may transmit CPE and require appropriate disinfection and storage.

Assoc. Prof. Devereaux acknowledged the cost and effort required in adhering to new guidelines, but said this was “a small price to pay to mitigate risk to patients, practitioners and the profession”.

“These Consensus Statements raise the bar on Australia’s current world-leading standards in the reprocessing of endoscopic equipment and ensures the continued safety of patients undergoing endoscopic procedures,” he added.

The guidance contained in the Consensus Statements endorsed by the Gastroenterological Society of Australia (GESA), the Gastroenterological Nurses College of Australia (GENCA) and the Australasian College for Infection Prevention and Control (ACIPC), equips gastroenterologists and other health professionals with a professional standard that should govern treatment and practice decision making.

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