Nursing Research Proposal: Hand Hygiene

**Introduction** Good health is as a result of combination of many factors, one of these factors is hand hygiene. The hands are probably the most used body organ. A day barely passes without holding multiple objects with our hands; we greet people, hold money, eat and clean our houses with our hands. It is therefore apparent that our Hands are at a higher exposure to germs than any other part of our body. It is also very easy for the germs picked up by our hands to be passed on into our body systems via oral transmission. This is due to the fact that we continuously use our hands, when eating for example; we may ingest the germs with the food we eat.

The most prone internal organ for infections passed on through our hands is the stomach, many people complain from time to time of stomachaches and minor diarrhea, these ailments are all attributable to poor health hygiene, it is therefore of very high importance to maintain a good hand hygiene, we should wash our hands constantly with a stipulated medical hand wash, for example a dettol hand wash, this should come before and after we have used our hands for various activities, for example after visiting the toilet, before and after a meal. This will ensure that our hands are clean and that germs may not be transferred from our hands to our mouths when we use our hands. Hand hygiene should start from our health professionals; nurses are health experts and are therefore expected to portray a good example to the other people. This paper will research on the standards of nurses hand hygiene in a Chicago hospital.

**Statement of purpose** Nurses as health professionals should promote a healthy living practices to the citizens. One of the ways of doing this is promoting hygienic practices like hand hygiene. This should be done at both the place of work and at the home place. In other words am saying that nurses should be ambassadors of promoting healthy living practices. The patients can easily copy what the nurses do in the hospital and consequently reduce their chances of getting stomach infections as a result of poor hand hygiene. This paper will carry out a research on the hygienic practices of nurses at a Chicago health facility to establish whether they are carrying on the gospel of proper hygiene or they just preach and not follow it, what the bible may term as preaching water and drinking wine. Setting a good example to the subjects who are the patients and the other citizens should be ethical practices by the nurses, by emulating the nurses they should get a low chance of catching a hand transmitted infection among other infections that are as a result of a poor hygiene living.

**Problem statement** There have been a high and rising number of stomach infections in Chicago recently. Many of the patients admitted in the wards suffer from stomach ailments. The nurses themselves have not also been left out by the infections, last month only, two nurses were admitted in the health facility complaining of severe stomachache. This raised a high health alert. If the infection swept through the health professionals then it is likely that the ramifications to the general citizens may be great. A lot of expenses and other facilities have been used for treating stomach infections, the question of what may have triggered the wave of stomach infections remains to be asked.

One of the probable causes of the widespread stomach infections is poor hand hygiene.
Many stomach ailments are caused by ingesting germs into our body systems through the food we eat. The hands are the organs used for eating; as such many of those germs may be picked up through the hands and transferred to our mouths. If we do not maintain good hand hygiene then we are at a risk of being bombarded with an array of stomach infections and as a result the government will channel a great amount of resources towards the treatment of infections which could otherwise be prevented at virtually no cost; just by giving our hands a good hygiene which any one can do at a very low effort if any.

When a high number of citizens are suffering from infections then the productivity of the workforce is set at minimum, the standards of living are also expected to go down as the citizens will be unable to work to meet their daily needs. Many people may take hand hygiene as a trivial matter; however the ramifications which may ensue from the same are far reaching. In addition to the decline in the economy, the pain borne by individuals suffering from stomach infections is hard to bear. The infections inflict suffering and threaten the general body fitness. The benefits of preventing these infections are therefore real; this should start with our health professionals, the nurses for this case setting a good example by maintaining proper hygienic standards.

**Nursing theorist Dorothea Orem self care theory** Self care refers to those individual practices that are done independently to promote the general good health of the person. Hand washing as one of those practices. General well being of individuals can be enhanced by regular washing of the hands. Many people take it as a triviality however it can save them many costs. Self care can only be achieved when the individuals have agency with self care. This is the personal initiative to pursue the self care practice. When individuals do not have the initiative to perform self care practices, then a deficit arises in self care and this may lead to ill health of the individuals.

When the individuals are ill, this is the point at which the nurse is expected to step in, he/she should meet the healthcare needs of such individuals by teaching, supporting guiding or providing an environment for the patients to achieve self care practice. The nurses can also offer a full compensatory assistance to the patients to enable them to fully recover, however as the old saying goes, when an hungry man requests for a fish from you, you should also provide him with a fishing rod and also teach him how to fish, this way you would have fully assisted him, this should also be the case with nurses and the patients on self care. This can be achieved by the nurses offering what is referred to as the partial compensatory assistance where the patient also plays some role in his/her recovery process; he or she will subsequently be able to develop a self care program to safeguard himself/herself. Nurses should therefore offer education to the patients on self care practices.

Another way of assisting the patients achieve self care is by setting a good example to them. Nurses should be among the first to embrace self care practices. It is unexpected of them to forsake this and also to suffer from infections related to lack of proper safe care practices.

**Literature review** I reviewed five journals on hand hygiene by health care experts. Larson (1995) provides the guideline for the nurses to ensure good hand hygiene. He talks about the aspect of the nurses setting a good example for the patients and the overall citizens. Nurses
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should never fail to observe good hand hygiene; they should wash their hands with proper antiseptics which destroys the germs on their hands. The writer also puts across that cases of infections to healthcare providers including the nurses resulting from poor hygiene should be on the minimal. This should set an example to the patients on the hygienic standards expected of them in order to curb ill health. According to Pittet & Boyce (2002), hand washing is one of the most effective means of preventing infections.

Most stomach infections are as a result of poor hand washing practices. Many people including the nurses usually ignore this especially when they have left the toilet. The writer also says that before ingesting anything into the mouth, individuals should ensure that their hands are clean. Nurses should be on the frontline in self care practice to set an example for the general citizens to emulate. Hazy & Wang (1998) conducted an observation on the hand washing habits in several healthcare facilities. In the observation they found out that the nurses too do not observe self care as it regards their hand wash, they observes that many nurses did not wash their hands continuously after leaving the rest rooms. The postulate that this habit by the nurses could have worsened the situation for the patients as the nurses used the same hands to administer prescriptions to patients.

According to Perneger & Mourouga et al. (1999), a survey they carried out in an hospital educating nurses indicated that the instructors themselves and the trainee nurses did not observe proper hand hygiene. This set a bad example to patients because they are bound to emulate the practices of their healthcare providers. Pittet (2000), provides recommendations on improving hygiene inside the hospitals, she says that the hygiene standards in hospitals should be high in order for the patients to learn from the same. This will go a mile in preventing the infections which are caused by poor hygienic practices.

Larson & Kretzer (2000), provide guidelines to the patients on how to improve their general fitness. They state that good hygienic standards can keep most of the stomach infections at bay. They observe hand washing as a paramount hygienic practice. It is what many people take for granted though they can reap many benefits as a result of implementation of the self care procedure. They also observe in the article that the self care hygienic practices should start by the healthcare professionals, this way they will set a good example to the citizens and many ailments will be avoided, this way substantial resources will be available for developmental purposes.

Expected outcomes It is expected that the nurses in the Chicago health facility do not observe hygienic hand wash facilities to the letter. With only last month two cases of nurses suffering from stomach infections in the hospital, the hand washing by the nurses in the hospital are in doubt. It is also evident from the high and increasing cases of stomach infection admissions in the hospital, that the hospital facility has not fully embraced the campaign to promote healthy hygienic practices in the state. From the literature review which indicated many nurses as preaching water and drinking wine, they preach hand hygiene but themselves do not embrace what they stand for, by this it is expected also from the literature that the nurses have not fully complied to self care.

Data collection The participants of this research undertaking will be nurses from a central
Chicago health facility. The data collection endeavor will approximately be in a week’s period. A preliminary visit will be conducted to the health facility prior to the research; to get the permission to carry on the research in the facility and also to familiarize with the respondents. In week of the data collection, a sample of ten nurses will be randomly selected from the nurses’ population in the hospital as a representative. The methods of data collection that will be use will be interviews and observation. The interviews will be conducted with the nurses to establish their level of compliance to self care practices. Questions that may be too personal will be avoided in the interviews. The observation technique will be applied on the sample in that: The hand washing patterns of the nurses will be observed. The observation will be concentrated on the nurses after leaving the rest room, during meals and when administering prescriptions to patients.

The data will be recorded in note form for analysis. Tables will then be drawn with the number of the nurses who have shown compliance to hand wash in the various observations subsections; after leaving the rest room, prior to meals or when ingesting anything into their mouths and when administering prescriptions to patients. After the analysis the findings will be projected to the population, this will be based on the compliance of the nurses to hand wash. Their move to promote self care practices by the patients will then be established which will indicate the level of self care in the state, recommendations on improvement will then be provided.

**Conclusion**  Hand hygiene is one self care practice that can go long way in keeping most stomach ailments at bay. Nurses should work relentlessly in promoting the self care practices, they need to set a good example by themselves adhering to hygienic practices like hand wash. This way a healthier population will be achieved and greater economic growth realized from energy of the citizens and the resources which will now not be channeled to healthcare.


