

## **Survey: Patients Worry About Hospital-Acquired Infections**

Nearly a third of Americans say they have experienced or know someone that has contracted a hospital acquired infection (HAI). These findings appeared in a September 2010 study conducted by ORC Research, a global market research firm.

HAIs — which include C. diff, MRSA, staph infection and pneumonia, among others — are the fourth leading cause of death in the U.S. according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Those who acquire these diseases in a hospital are often at an increased risk of death because such patients often have weakened immune systems.

The researchers also noted that along with proper hand washing, effective cleaning plays a key role in preventing the spread and prevention of HAIs. But "hospital cleaning teams are not [always] able to disinfect all surfaces in patient rooms, with research indicating [that] more than half of the surfaces may remain untouched," says the report.

The study also revealed:

- 63 percent of Americans are worried about contracting an HAI
- For people over 65, that figure jumps to 73 percent
- 75 percent said they would "feel safer" in a hospital that uses more thorough and effective cleaning and disinfecting systems

"My big concern when reports like this come out is that many hospitals will respond by overusing disinfectants," says Mike Sawchuk, vice president of Enviro-Solutions and Charlotte Products. "As necessary as they are, it cannot be denied that disinfectants can have a negative impact on the environment."

According to Sawchuk, avoiding the overuse of disinfectants is imperative. Luckily, the CDC has developed cleaning procedures that allow hospital administrators and cleaning professionals to achieve this goal while still protecting patient health.

Their method dictates that cleaning teams divide their facility into critical, semi-critical, and noncritical areas. The use of disinfectants is necessary only in the critical and some parts of the semi-critical areas.

"Disinfectants are not necessary in the noncritical areas, so avoiding their use in those areas

reduces the impact [of cleaning] on building occupants and the environment," adds Sawchuk.

"However, when it comes to cleaning, what is key in all areas of a medical facility is that there be an effective cleaning program in place — including the proper products, procedures and cleaning frequencies — to protect everyone's health."