



CHICA-CANADA PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Infection Prevention and Control Related to Electronic (IT) Devices in Healthcare Settings

Electronic devices (for example, cellular phones, tablets, portable computers) are increasingly important in health care for myriad functions, some of which result in their being classified as non-critical medical devices. Most are at risk of becoming fomites for the transmission of microorganisms. Standards and regulations addressing infection prevention and control considerations for electronic devices have lagged behind their use. This document focuses on electronic devices used for Information Technology (IT) purposes, including personal devices and accessories that:

- stay with the health care worker (HCW) in clinical areas (e.g., smartphone);
- are used for patient teaching and may stay with the patient in clinical areas (e.g., tablet); and
- move from patient to patient in clinical areas (e.g., computer/workstation on wheels - WOW).

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Stakeholders: All HCWs who use portable electronic devices as part of their duties; electronic device manufacturers; and infection control professionals.

Infection Prevention and Control Practice Recommendations for Electronic (IT) Devices

1. Hand hygiene is the most important factor in the prevention of transmission of microorganisms. IT devices should be approached with clean hands. Hand hygiene should be performed between patient contact and before and after accessing a device.
2. Prior to selection and purchase of electronic devices, manufacturer's guidelines for use, cleaning/disinfection and maintenance should be reviewed to ensure these guidelines meet the standards for cleaning and low-level disinfection that are necessary for exposure to Multi-Drug-Resistant Organisms (MDROs), *C. difficile* and non-enveloped viruses.
3. Items that cannot be adequately cleaned should not be used OR should be designated as "clean" and not be accessed in patient rooms or be touched by patients.
4. If an item cannot be cleaned with a hospital-grade disinfectant and is necessary for patient care, a risk assessment should be done with infection prevention and control to determine the best approach to mitigate the risk of transmission of microorganisms.
5. All touch surfaces of IT devices used at, or near, point-of-care must be cleaned and disinfected with a hospital-grade disinfectant (per manufacturer's instructions) if used or touched during the encounter with the patient.

6. The surface of telephone components, pagers and computer 'mice' should be cleaned in a manner that prevents damage to internal systems from excessive fluid. LCD screens in non-clinical areas can be cleaned with Information Technology (IT)-approved screen cleaning products.
7. If an item cannot be adequately cleaned and will be accessed in a patient room or touched by patients, it requires a cleanable cover. Impervious keyboard covers, skins or solid, fluid-resistant keyboards that can be cleaned and disinfected are recommended.
8. The user/owner of the device is responsible for routine cleaning and disinfection of the device and that responsibility must be clearly communicated. The identified staff must follow facility protocols for cleaning and disinfection after each patient encounter in which the device is potentially contaminated.

References

1. Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee (PIDAC). Best Practices for Cleaning, Disinfection and Sterilization in All Health Care Settings. 2010; Available from: <http://www.oahpp.ca/resources/pidac-knowledge/best-practice-manuals/cleaning-disinfection-and-sterilization.html>.
2. Alberta Health Services. Cleaning and Disinfection of Information Technology and Telephone Equipment and Devices. 2010; Available from: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/hp/if-hp-ipc-cleaning-disinfection-info.pdf>.

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