Estates and Facilities Alert

Reference:	Issued:	Review Date:
EFA/2019/001	**11 January 2019**	**10 January 2025**

Portable fans in health and social care facilities: risk of cross infection

Summary

Portable fans used in clinical areas have been linked to cross infection in health and social care facilities. Each use and reuse should be clinically risk assessed. Local procurement, cleaning, decontamination and maintenance policies must be produced and kept under review.

Action

1. All portable fans used in clinical areas should be clinically risk assessed for each use and reuse. The risk assessment should address the following:
    a. Portable fans are not recommended for use during outbreaks of infection or when a patient is known or suspected to have an infectious agent.
    b. Availability of manufacturers' information and advice on how to maintain and decontaminate the fan. This should be consistent with national [(1)] and local infection prevention and control policy.
    c. Consideration should be given to whether the fan can be adequately decontaminated for safe reuse or whether it should be disposed of after use.
    d. Any assurance and evidence provided by the manufacturer that internal contamination will not be dispersed into the clinical/care area.
2. Any portable fans determined by risk assessment to present an infection risk should be removed from clinical use.
3. All portable fans used in health and social care facilities:
    a. should be removed from the clinical area immediately and decontaminated after each patient use,
    b. and subject to planned preventative maintenance.
4. National procurement bodies should include specialist infection control input to product specification and evaluation criteria to ensure that procurement of all reusable patient care equipment is sufficiently risk assessed prior to purchase.
5. Local procurement must ensure that Infection Prevention and Control Teams and estates departments are consulted when patient equipment is being procured locally for use in health and social care facilities.

Action by

- Directors of Infection Prevention and Control
- Infection Control Managers
- Procurement Leads
- Health & Safety Managers
- Estates & Facilities Managers
- Domestic Services Managers
- Directors of Nursing

Deadlines for action

Actions underway: 05 February 2019
Actions complete: 02 April 2019

Problem / background

6. Bladeless portable fans have been linked to healthcare associated infection.[(2)] Dust and debris can naturally accumulate within the body of bladeless fans and this will provide a reservoir for micro-organisms.

7. There is currently no evidence that conventional bladed fans disperse micro-organisms in the same way. However, the electric motors in these fans are air cooled and, similar to bladeless fans, dust and debris can accumulate within the motor housing. A similar reservoir of micro-organisms may therefore be created and entrained in the airflow. As a precautionary measure they may be considered equally implicated. Consequently, all portable fans are within scope of this alert.

8. Health Protection Scotland has produced an SBAR and position statement on the appropriate use and reuse of portable fans (bladed and bladeless) in clinical areas.[(3)]

9. Fans should be classed as unsuitable for reuse if the manufacturer cannot provide appropriate risk information, maintenance and decontamination instructions consistent with national and local decontamination polices for reusable patient care equipment.

10. The Republic of Ireland's Health Service Executive has recently published guidance [(4)] which may be helpful to the development of local procurement, cleaning, decontamination and maintenance policies.

11. Portable fans used in non-clinical areas are outside the scope of this alert although these should be visibly cleaned and maintained.

References

1) National Infection Prevention and Control Manual, Health Protection Scotland
2) Alsaffar L, Osbourne L, Bourne NT. Bacterial Colonisation of Bladeless Electrical Fans. Journal of Hospital Infection 2018.
3) Health Protection Scotland. SBAR: Portable cooling fans for use in clincial areas. 2018.
4) 2018 Guidelines for the Use of Portable Electric Fans in Healthcare Settings, Republic of Ireland Health Service Executive

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Enquiries

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England

Enquires should quote reference number EFA/2019/001 and be addressed to:-
nhsi.mb-defectsandfailures@nhs.net

Reporting adverse incidents in England
Defects or failures should be reported on this system: http://efm.hscic.gov.uk/

The web-based D&F reporting system is managed by the NHS and Social Care Information Centre on behalf of the Department of Health. For further information on this system, including obtaining login details, please contact the efm-information Helpdesk. Tel 0300 303 5678.

Northern Ireland

Enquiries and adverse incident reports in Northern Ireland should be addressed to:

Northern Ireland Adverse Incident Centre, CMO Group,
Department of Health
Tel: 028 9052 3868 Email: niaic@health-ni.gov.uk
http://www.health-ni.gov.uk/niaic

Reporting adverse incidents in Northern Ireland
Please report directly to NIAIC using the forms on our website.

Scotland

Enquiries and adverse incident reports in Scotland should be addressed to:

Incident Reporting and Investigation Centre (IRIC)
Health Facilities Scotland, NHS National Services Scotland
Tel: 0131 275 7575 E-mail: nss.iric@nhs.net

Reporting adverse incidents in Scotland
Use our online report form or download the PDF form
Independent facilities which only provide private care should report to the Care Inspectorate.

Wales

Enquiries and adverse incident reports in Wales should be addressed to:

NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership – Specialist Estates Services
4th Floor, Companies House, Crown Way, Cardiff CF14 3UB

Tel: 029 2090 4118
E-mail: efa.ses@wales.nhs.uk

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