National Patient Safety Alert

UK Health Security Agency

Contamination of hygiene products with *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*

Date of issue:	07/07/2022	Reference no:	NatPSA/2022/005/UKHSA

This alert is for action by: All health and care providers using or providing named hygiene products manufactured by Vernacare.

This is a safety critical and complex National Patient Safety Alert. Implementation should be co-ordinated by an executive lead (or equivalent role in organisations without executive boards) and supported by Directors of Infection Prevention and Control and Heads of Procurement or appropriate Director or senior manager.

Explanation of identified safety issue:

Pseudomonas aeruginosa has been detected in some hygiene products manufactured by Vernacare. Two product recall notices have been issued on 21/04/22 and 05/07/22:
1. All 'in-date' cosmetic products including: wet wipes, washmitts, barrier cloths, bedbath washcloths and shampoo caps produced at Vernacare's Lancashire facility
2. Wet wipes sold under other brand names.

P. aeruginosa, a Gram-negative bacterium, is often found in soil and water. It can cause a wide range of infections, particularly in people with a weakened immune system. It is associated with healthcare infections, particularly pneumonia and sepsis, and resistant to many commonly used antibiotics.

A large recent outbreak of *P. aeruginosa* ST3875 in Norway (Oct. 2021- Jun. 2022) was associated with contaminated disposable wipes (Vernacare Oasis bedbath wipes) and comprised nearly 400 patients from 40 hospitals. Cases had a median age of 70 years and were from predominately intensive care or vulnerable patient groups. 25% of cases had clinically severe infection. Pseudomonas infection was considered by treating clinicians to be a contributing factor in the death of several cases.

UKHSA are not aware of any related outbreaks in England, although invasive Pseudomonas isolates are not routinely submitted for typing/ sequencing, and potentially associated cases may not have been detected.

Affected products are not supplied through NHS Supply Chain but have been supplied directly or via suppliers to a wide range of settings including healthcare (e.g. hospitals), care facilities (e.g. care homes), local authorities, pharmacies, and commercial premises. Products are also sold online.

It is crucial to ensure relevant products are removed, especially from health and care settings. There is need to raise awareness among health and care professionals who might encounter potentially associated cases to inform clinical care, surveillance and public health action.

Actions required

Actions to be completed by 15 July 2022

1. Ensure that affected products are removed from the setting immediately and procurement of recalled products is ceased. Dispose of product or quarantine and contact Vernacare to arrange return (please see the first and second recall notices)

2.Where clinicians identify a patient with the following microbiological criteria:
- an invasive *P. aeruginosa* isolate (blood or sterile site)

AND
- a 'fully sensitive' Pseudomonas antibiogram i.e. sensitive to quinolones, aminoglycosides, piperacillin-tazobactam, and meropenem

they should specifically enquire about prior use of recalled products (including their use in home and care environments).

Where cases meet the above microbiological criteria **AND recalled product use is known or suspected**, the clinician should notify their local UKHSA Health Protection Team (HPT) and liaise with their laboratory and microbiology colleagues regarding submission of relevant isolate(s) for typing.

3. Laboratory and microbiology teams are requested to arrange submission of relevant isolate(s) (see criteria above) to the Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infection (AMRHAI) reference laboratory (additional information overleaf).

For further detail, resources and supporting materials see: Product Recall: Vernacare Wetwipes and Personal Cleansing Products and Product Recall: Personal Cleansing Products under brand names Caremore, CCN/Medirite, CHL, Countrywide, Fairfield and Fittleworth

For any enquiries about this alert contact: UKHSA.NICC73@ukhsa.gov.uk

Failure to take the actions required under this National Patient Safety Alert may lead to CQC taking regulatory action

Additional information:

Information on product recall

Details regarding the product recall including instructions on contacting Vernacare are provided on the Vernacare website which can be found via this link. Information including product codes has also been published on GOV.UK by the Office for Product Safety and Standards and can be found via this link.
The following product brands are subject to recall:

•Oasis Bedbath – Unperfumed and Perfumed (wipes)
•Oasis Maceratable Bedbath – Unperfumed and Perfumed
•Oasis Shampoo Cap - Unperfumed and Perfumed
•Oasis Washmitt - Unperfumed and Perfumed
•Conti Flushable Skin Cleansing Wet Wipes
•Conti Continence Care - Skin Cleansing Wipes, Patient Cleansing Wet Wipes, Skin Cleansing Wet Wipes
•Conti Continence Care - 3% Dimethicone Barrier Cloth
•Senset Skin Cleansing Wipes (labelled as patient wipes)

An additional recall for wipes manufactured by Vernacare was issued on 05/07/22:

•Caremore - Wet Wipes
•CCN/Medirite - Wet Wipes
•CHL (Care Home Life) - Large Wet Wipes
•Countrywide Patient Cleansing Wipes (Moist Handi Wipes, Handy Wipe, Wet Wipe, Large Moist Body Wipes)
•Fairfield - Wet Wipes and Moist Patient Wipes
•Fittleworth - Complementary Cleansing Wet Wipes

Instruction for laboratories regarding submission of isolates

Please submit isolates to the AMRHAI reference laboratory using the Healthcare pathogens request form H1 (multiple isolates) or H2 (single isolates) available at AMRHAI reference unit: reference and diagnostic services - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Please label isolates 'Potential Vernacare contamination isolate'.
Please continue to submit relevant isolate(s) until further notice.
Due to limited typing capacity, priority has been given to invasive isolates; however, the outbreak strain has been detected from a wide range of clinical samples in the Norway outbreak. Should non-invasive isolates meet the above criteria, particularly in relation to outbreak scenarios, please contact local health protection teams (HPTs) to discuss need for submission. Isolate submission should be prioritised in potentially associated outbreaks in health or social care settings (especially relating to augmented and critical care); and where individuals affected are from vulnerable groups including immunocompromised patients.

Information on associated outbreak

For further information on the Norway outbreak, the following links are provided:

- Eurosurveillance | Pseudomonas aeruginosa countrywide outbreak in hospitals linked to pre-moistened non-sterile washcloths, Norway, October 2021 to April 2022
- National outbreak of Pseudomonas aeruginosa in hospitals caused by pre-fed non-sterile washcloths – FHI

Stakeholder engagement

The following stakeholders have been engaged in the incident management and consulted in the drafting of this alert: NHS England and NHS Improvement, Department of Health and Social Care, Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, Office for Product Safety and Standards, Trading Standards, Public Health Wales, Public Health Agency, Northern Ireland, Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infection Scotland (ARHAI) Scotland, NHS Supply Chain, Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

Advice for Central Alerting System (CAS) officers and risk managers

This is a safety critical and complex National Patient Safety Alert. In response to CHT/2019/001 your organisation should have developed new processes to ensure appropriate oversight and co-ordination of all National Patient Safety Alerts. CAS officers should send this Alert to the executive lead nominated in their new process to coordinate implementation of safety critical and complex National Patient Safety Alerts.