

Copper kills 97 pct of hospital ICU bacteria-study

Fri Jul 1, 2011 2:40pm GMT

NEW YORK, July 1 (Reuters) - Antimicrobial copper surfaces in intensive care units (ICU) kill 97 percent of bacteria that can cause hospital-acquired infections, according to preliminary results of a multisite clinical trial in the United States.

The results also showed a 86% percent reduction in the risk of acquiring an infection.

The study, presented at the World Health Organization's 1st International Conference on Prevention and Infection Control (ICPIC) in Geneva, Switzerland, on Friday, backed what research teams at three U.S. hospitals suggested four years ago: replacing the most heavily contaminated touch surfaces in ICUs with antimicrobial copper will control bacteria growth and cut down on infection rates. [ID:nN1E75T1CR]

Hospital-acquired infections (HAIs) are the fourth leading cause of death in the United States behind heart disease, strokes and cancer.

According to estimates provided by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, nearly one in every 20 hospitalized U.S. patients acquires an HAI, resulting in 100,000 lives lost each year.

The 97%percent reduction rate in bacteria on antimicrobial copper surfaces is the same as that achieved by "terminal" cleaning -- a process that is done after a patient leaves a room.

Dr. Michael Schmidt, professor and vice chairman of microbiology and immunology at the Medical University of South Carolina, who presented the results, said, "Bacteria present on ICU room surfaces are probably responsible for up to 80 percent of patient infections, demonstrating how critical it is to keep hospitals clean.

"The copper objects used in the clinical trial lowered microbial levels and supplemented cleaning protocols." (Reporting by Chris Kelly; editing by Jim Marshall)