

Bed Bath: The Frontline of Defense

By: Prakash Poudyal

Nosocomial infection, which is acquired during the care, is one of the major concern of today's health care system (Halcomb, Griffiths, & Fernandez, 2008). Patients' hygiene and cleanliness and the therapeutic relationships are also very important aspects of the patients' care during their hospital stay (Dziopa & Ahern, 2009). This article compares the benefit between providing and not providing the traditional basin bed baths for the Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) patients. This article argues how providing the traditional basin bath to the MRSA patients can elevate the risk of nosocomial infection. Furthermore, this article explains the relationship between the MRSA patients, traditional basin bed baths and the prevalence of nosocomial infection. In this article, professional roles of the nurses in relation to the traditional basin bed bath to the MRSA patients has also been discussed. More than thirteen

peer reviewed journals, acquired from Nursing Journals, and three text books from well known writers have been cited to prepare the scholarly paper.

Keywords: bed bath, nursing roles, frontline of defense, therapeutic relationship

Introduction and Background

Bedridden patients are usually not able to perform their personal hygiene because of their physiological limitations; therefore, it is the nurses' duties to provide hygiene and comfort for these patients (Larson, et al., 2004). Traditional basin bed bath is still one of the standard nursing practice which is aimed to provide feelings of cleanliness to the patients. The nurses often need to take care of the patients who have been infected with the Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA). In this context, I purpose that providing the traditional basin bed bath is not an appropriate option for the MRSA patients

as it may increase the risk of nosocomial infection. Therefore, we should discourage the nurses to provide the traditional basin baths for the MRSA patients as much as possible. In this paper, I will explain the risks associated with providing the traditional basin baths for the MRSA patients during their hospital stay, followed by a few important recommendations based on the current evidence based practice. The scope of the topics is limited to the risks of providing the traditional bed baths for the MRSA patients, all other patients are excluded.

Definitions Relevant to Topic:

It is noteworthy to mention that the Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (will be referred as “MRSA”) is potentially fatal infection caused by the Staphylococcus aureus bacteria that is resistant to the broad-spectrum antibiotics (Day, Paul, Smeltzer, & Bare, 2010). The term “nosocomial infection” is referred as the infections that the patients acquire during the hospitalization period (Adams, Josephson, & Holland, 2010).

Traditional basin bath is reusable water filled basin to give bed bath and newer bag bath refers to the Bag Bath® developed by Susan M. Skewes in 1990 (Skewes, 1994).

Importance to Patient Care and Nursing Practice

This topic is very important to the patient care and the nurses because the study shows nosocomial infection is common in the hospital environment, and the MRSA is mainly transmitted thru the healthcare workers such as the nurses (Sheff, 1998). The nurses can infect themselves and they can spread the infection to the other patients in the health care facilities.

Nursing Roles:

The roles of the nurses is to minimize the spreading of disease to prevent further nosocomial infections in the clinical environment while providing bed bath to their patients. The nurses must be aware of the physiology and complication of their patients. Then the nurses learn and use their skills required

to give bed bath for their patients. The nurses have to be careful to apply this knowledge and skills to minimize the risk of spreading the disease. For this reason, it is very important for the nurses to understand the benefits, risks, positive and negative impacts, and proper techniques and types of bed baths.

Importance of Nursing Role:

Bed bath is one of the nurses' everyday responsibilities. Traditional basin bed bath looks simple task. It could be true if all their patients are physiologically similar, however, nature and physiological limitation of patients are often unique to each other; that is what makes the bed bath duties critical. Stopping or preventing the spread of disease is one of the major goals of nursing duties, therefore, the discussions presented here are very important for the nursing roles to provide quality patients care.

Current Research

There are researches that claim that the traditional basin bath is not

appropriate for the MRSA patients while other argue that the nurses are responsible to provide cleanliness to all of their patients no matter what kinds of disease they are suffering from. In the next section, I will discuss why, what and how these arguments support and oppose my proposal mentioned above.

Researches that Oppose my Proposal:

Traditional bed baths are not limited to provide cleanliness feelings to the patients; it is also related to the patients comfort and dignity (Pegram, Bloomfield, & Jones, 2007). It is not to minimize the risk of spreading infection within a hospital environment; the nurses use it to create a respecting and trusting relationship to the client. These relationships are very important to maintain the therapeutic relationship for any patients whether they are MRSA positive or negative. Sheff (1998) argues that a good hand washing can prevent the MRSA from spreading. Spreading of the MRSA during bathing can also be prevented by using right kinds of soaps

and disinfectant, for example, Climo, et al. (2009) suggests that chlorhexidine skin disinfectant can reduce the chance of spreading of the MRSA.

Researches that Support my Proposal:

Traditional basins bed bath can increase the chance of cross-contamination. Accidents such as spills and droplets are also common during the traditional basin bath; therefore, it can transmit pathogens from one patient to another, and patient to the nurses (Johnson, Lineweaver, & Maze, 2009). According to the study conducted by Larson, et al. (2004), traditional basin bath is associated with the mechanical friction of the outer infected skin cells, therefore, current disposable bath, also called bag bath, is preferred by the nurses to provide bed bath to their patients. These infected skin particles and cells are capable of spreading the MRSA within the hospital environment. Halcomb, Griffiths, & Fernandez (2008) claims that many literatures suggested that the hospital environment and equipments are the

potential source for nosocomial transmission of the MRSA because they come into contact with the multiple patients and the nurses. They claim that the MRSA can be transmitted from common hospital objects such as bed rail, basin, soap and reusable towel. Study conducted by Johnson, Lineweaver, & Maze (2009) shows that even a standard nursing precautions such as glove and gown is not always sufficient to prevent from spreading of such deadly pathogens because the chance of such contamination is very high. The research conducted by Hoffman (2009) found out that bacteria were growing in the bath basins even after emptying and drying the basin for at least 2 hours after bathing. This suggests that it is virtually not possible to stop these contaminations when the nurses provide traditional basin bath to their patients.

Impact of Research on Current Practice:

As the researches, mentioned above, suggest that the new disposal bag bath would be the better ways of

preventing of spreading the MRSA. The researchers also suggest that the impact of the disposable bag bath is not only useful to reduce the nosocomial infection, it is also financially feasible. Carruth, Ricks, & Pullen (1995) claims that ISO 9001 certified Bag Bath® provides skin care with moistening lotion, non-ionic water and balance pH. Further, they claim that Bag Bath® is cost effective and user friendly. The study shows labor and non-labor cost associated with traditional basin bed bath is much higher than the newer Bag Bath® technique. As an impact, the numbers of the newer disposal bag bath users are increasing daily (Skewes, 1994).

Recommendations for Positive Impact on Current Practice:

The arguments should not be limited to the ethical aspect; the most important aspect of the debate is human cost of providing basin bath to these MRSA patients. The study conducted by Halcomb, Griffiths, & Fernandez (2008) clearly shows that the MRSA is a major

threat to the public health around the world. They concluded that nosocomial infection is the most common complication we can see in our hospital care. In order to minimize the nosocomial infection, their recommendation for the newer disposable bag bath might positively impact the current practice. Additionally, newer disposable bag bath helps to prevent disease transmission, infection control and reduce the hospitalization time and cost for the patients. If it is done properly, newer disposable bag bath also helps to create a therapeutic relationship between the nurses and patients like basin bath.

Questions that Remained Unanswered

During my research, there are two unanswered questions I would like to put forward. First, imagine a situation where the nurses are requested to provide a bed bath for a patient who's complication is new to the medical world and not yet diagnosed by medical professional and suspected to be more severe like the MRSA, anthrax related bio-terrorism and

even worst. In this situation, how do the nurses provide bed bath for this patient since they cannot predict the consequences of the bed bath? Second, environment is one of the key health determinants (Potter, Perry, Ross-Kerr, & Wood, 2006). Therefore, our next research must address how the bed baths for the MRSA patients effect the local environment. We must acknowledge that *Staphylococcus aureus* can survive in a harsh condition like household soap, detergents and public drainage. Therefore, the local water system may be contaminated by the patients' skin particles that are infected by the MRSA. Here, the research will have to find out if other bathing technology such as hot air bath or vacuum bath (Baths, 2007) are better to comfort the MRSA patients and yet not harming the local environment. These two questions must be included in the future research so that the nurses will be ready to provide a professional bed baths to the patients involved in these two situations mentioned in this section.

Conclusion

History of the basin bed bath begins with the era of World War I when Florence Nightingale, a pioneer nurse, initiated the patient bathing procedures as we now referred as traditional bed bath (Lentz, 2003). There were no MRSA patients at that time as we have now (Day, Paul, Williams, Smeltzer, & Bare, 2010). It makes the traditional basin bed bath more risky than those days. Therefore, the nurses' skills and experiences are very critical to provide the bed bath whether it is traditional basin bath or newer disposable bag bath (Castledine, 2003).

As we discussed above, many researches indicate that traditional basin bath is not good for the MRSA patient as it may increase the risk of nosocomial infection. They suggest that a purposeful and skillful new disposable bag bath helps the nurses to minimize the spreading of the MRSA infection and promotes patients health and comfort side by side. It reduces the hospitalization period

increasing nursing efficiency and decreasing the nation's health care cost as oppose to the traditional basin bath. Therefore, it is noteworthy that the newer disposable bed baths, in comparison with traditional basin baths, are helping the nurses to improve the MRSA patients' hygiene and comfort. Developer of Bag Bath®, Susan M. Skewes (1994) thinks that the cost, efficiency and the nurses' satisfaction are the main reason why popularity of bag bath has been increasing.

Finally, we should not forget that one of the nursing goals is to help the patients to gain health, comfort, feeling of cleanliness and wellness. Spreading the deadly microorganism using traditional basin bath does not support this aim of the nursing profession. Therefore, it is worthless to provide the traditional basin

bed baths to the Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) patients. The cost and risk associated to the traditional basin baths for these groups of patients is much higher than the benefits of providing baths to them. It is true that the nurses are responsible for all of their patients' health and hygiene not one particular patient, i.e. MRSA negative patient, however, it is also true that taking risk of spreading disease is not something that the nurses' ethical value suggests them to do. Thus, we should encourage the nurses to assist these MRSA positive patients for shower bath as much as possible, if shower bath is not possible, we should encourage them to give newer disposable bag bath with caution.

References

[[Click Here For References](#)]