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## Contamination of laryngoscope handles.

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### Abstract

Despite use of sterile or disposable laryngoscope blades for each patient, disinfection of laryngoscope handles does not routinely occur, and these devices present a potential route of transmission of pathogens between patients and staff. A total of 192 specimens from 64 laryngoscope handles deemed 'ready for patient use' in the anaesthetic rooms of 32 operating theatres were semiquantitatively assessed for bacterial contamination. A further 116 specimens from 58 of the handles were tested for occult blood contamination. **One or more species of bacteria were isolated from 55 (86%) of the handles, and included organisms such as enterococci, meticillin-susceptible *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Klebsiella* and *acinetobacter*.** Cultures did not yield any anaerobes, fungi, meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, vancomycin-resistant enterococci or multiply-resistant Gram-negative bacilli. No occult blood contamination was demonstrated. Although the majority of organisms isolated were not pathogenic, their presence indicates the potential for transmission of pathogens from laryngoscope handles. Strategies to address contamination of handles include revision of procedures for disinfection and storage prior to use, introduction of disposable handles or sheaths, and re-design of handles to eliminate knurled surfaces and contact points.

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