

Filthy hospitals blamed for 90 superbug deaths

11th October, 2007



Poor hygiene has been blamed for the superbug outbreak

Hospital mismanagement of *Clostridium difficile* was blamed for 90 deaths attributed to the bug in a damning new report.

"Significant failings" at all levels contributed to more than 1,000 patients being infected with the bug across three hospitals run by one NHS trust, a Healthcare Commission study found.

A total of 345 patients died while being infected with C diff, of which around 21 definitely died from it and 69 probably had it as their main cause of death.

The infection was said to be a definite contributing factor in 124 deaths, probably a factor in 55 and possibly a factor in 62.

The number of deaths was far higher than declared by the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust to the media and the Commission.

The affected hospitals were the Kent and Sussex Hospital, Pembury Hospital and Maidstone Hospital.

Inadequate staffing levels, dirty wards and too much focus on debts and Government targets all contributed to two serious outbreaks of C diff in the autumn of 2005 and early 2006, the study revealed.

Nurses were found to have told some patients with diarrhoea to "go in their beds".

The watchdog has sent its report to the Health and Safety Executive and Kent Police, who will decide if there are grounds for criminal charges.

The trust's chief executive Rose Gibb left her job on Friday by mutual agreement with the trust's board.

Health Minister Ann Keen said: "I would like to offer my sincere condolences to the patients and families who have been affected by these outbreaks.

"This type of failure must not be repeated.

"Trusts must deliver clean, safe treatment to every patient, every time and where senior management and trust boards fail to act, they must be held accountable."

Former Bucks Fizz star Cheryl Baker has called for Maidstone Hospital to stop admitting patients who were vulnerable to C diff.

Her mother-in-law Doreen Ford, 77, died there from septicaemia while infected with the bug. The Trust was the subject of an undercover BBC investigation in May 2004 - months before the 2005 and 2006 outbreaks of C diff.

It found evidence of blood stains ingrained on the floor and clinical waste skips containing bags full of old dressings and bodily fluids left open in corridors used by visitors and patients.

Anna Walker, the Commission's chief executive, said: "What happened to the patients at this trust was a tragedy.

"This report fully exposes the reasons for that tragedy, so that the same mistakes are never made again.

"I urge all trusts to heed the lessons of this report so that they can look patients in the eye and say that everything possible is being done to protect people from infection.

"That is the least that patients can expect. Dr Malcolm Stewart, medical director of the trust, apologised for the tragedy.

Source: <http://www.metro.co.uk>