

Citing Mounting Evidence, Experts Petition The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to Elevate Stethoscope Hygiene Requirements

- In a widely respected infection control journal, experts warn that contaminated stethoscopes are undermining the foundation of infection control in the United States.
- The expert panel issued a “call to action” for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to update antiquated guidelines in light of new understanding of the scope of the problem and new innovations, including The DiskCover™ System from AseptiScope®.

May 20, 2021 San Diego, CA – A leading group of experts has implored the CDC to urgently elevate the importance of stethoscope hygiene considering mounting and incontrovertible evidence.

To reduce healthcare associated infections in the US, the expert panel urged the CDC to act on an unchecked contamination risk implicating the most leveraged medical instrument in the world, the stethoscope. US healthcare professionals utilize the stethoscope more than 5 billion times a year for immediate identification of heart, lung, and abdominal abnormalities, earning it the moniker “the clinician’s third hand.” This designation is apt as it also conveys the stethoscope’s role as an equally potent vector, when compared to the hands, for pathogen transmission.

“The CDC appropriately focuses enormous attention on hand hygiene, yet they diminish the stethoscope as a non-critical surface for cleaning. Based on overwhelming data, this lack of priority directly undermines hand hygiene efforts and must be changed,” said Alpesh Amin, MD, MBA, MACD, SFHM, FACP, FRCP, one of the stethoscope hygiene experts in the CDC call to action. *“This gap in our patient safety initiatives will continue to plague infection control protocols until the CDC acknowledges that hygiene for our third hand is as important as it is for our own two hands.”*

Cynthia Cadwell, NP, CPHQ, a patient safety nurse and member of the American Association of Critical Care Nurses, is a co-author of this CDC call to action publication. *“As caregivers we are dedicated to protecting our patients, but we look to the CDC for guidelines and recommendations,”* Cadwell stated. *“Today’s innovations are superior to decades-old methods and will not only better protect our patients, but also work instantly, giving us more time to provide patient care. We turn to the CDC for direction, but they have yet to update guidance on this critical issue,”* Cadwell concluded.

The expert panel published their CDC call to action initiative in the respected medical journal *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology*. The article references a wealth of recent data that reveals alarming rates of stethoscope contamination in hospitals and clinics around the country. Among recent innovations, the expert panel referenced clinical studies featuring the new DiskCover System from AseptiScope.

“The DiskCover System applies aseptic disk covers to any stethoscope. This robust barrier shields the patient from any harmful bacteria and yet is acoustically invisible, which means we can evaluate our patients with no sound interference whatsoever. It is a proven solution to deal with this problem and we need the CDC to know these innovations exist,” stated Sarathi Kalra, MD, MPH, a clinical investigator and expert who assessed acoustic performance of stethoscopes with disk covers and compared them to similar stethoscopes and disposable stethoscopes without disk covers.

The DiskCover System (www.diskcover.com), the flagship product from AseptiScope, is the first and only touch-free stethoscope barrier dispensing system. The System dispenses single-use aseptic disk covers to protect patients from exposure to harmful pathogens and contaminants on the stethoscope diaphragm. The compact System, designed to be mounted close to the point of care, applies individual disk covers instantly, minimizing workflow disruption while encouraging clinician compliance.

“It is exciting to know that healthcare experts recognize the magnitude of the stethoscope contamination challenge. We are excited to bring forward an innovation that resolves the problem while giving our healthcare providers more time for patients,” commented Scott Mader, AseptiScope founder and CEO.

About AseptiScope Inc.

AseptiScope is a privately funded San Diego, California based, clinical innovation company formed in 2016. The organization is founded and led by clinical innovation experts, leading medical researchers and practicing physicians. The AseptiScope mission is to design, develop, manufacture, and commercialize novel solutions that ensure “Infection Protection for Clinician & Patient.” The company is introducing the first true solution for the longstanding challenge of stethoscope contamination: The DiskCover System. Visit www.diskcover.com for more information.

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