To Flush or Not To Flush?

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• Efforts to decrease hospital-acquired infections have led to an increase in the use of disposable pre-packaged bathing cloths and wipe-based disinfectants.
• This has resulted in an increase in inappropriate flushing of cloths and wipes, leading to costly plumbing repairs and patient care disruptions in hospitals.

• St. Joseph’s Health Centre, Toronto, implemented the use of pre-packaged bathing products.
• At the same time a novel plumbing protection system (PPS) trial began to prevent inappropriate items from being flushed.
• Twenty general medicine inpatient toilets were retrofitted for initial part of the trial.
• Nursing and environmental service employees were educated to use retrieval hooks to clear un-flushable items from the PPS-equipped toilets.
• A projected accounting breakeven-point and time analysis evaluated the utility of installing PPSs facility-wide.

• The average toilet-clog rate by inpatient unit ranged from 0-77/year – with mental health and general medicine being the highest (p > 0.05)
• Time-to-breakeven was calculated as 0.8 (mental health) and 7.0 (general medicine) years.
• The accounting breakeven-point on twenty PPS installations was calculated as 68.5 clogs.

• Fifty-five days into the trial 33 retrieval hooks were used to remove un-flushable items, potentially preventing 33 clogs.
• Brown paper towel, disinfectant and incontinent wipes were captured by the PPS; no pre-packaged bathing cloths were retrieved.
• 96% of staff felt the PPS system effectively prevented clogs and made them more aware of what items they flushed down the toilet.

• PPS installation translated to labour cost savings and a decrease in patient care disruptions on the trial units.
• The accounting breakeven-point for PPS is likely far less if other costs associated with clogs/floods could be included in the analysis.
• Overall, we found that medicine units would benefit most from PPS.
• Due to safety challenges, their use on mental health units is not recommended.

BACKGROUND

METHODS

RESULTS

CONCLUSIONS

To WIPES CLOG PIPES!