

Compassionate care and good hygiene

If you asked a random passer-by what the point of cleaning is, they may say something like ‘to stay healthy’ or ‘to keep things looking nice’.

If pressed to consider the specific context of aged care and hospital settings, ‘preventing infection’ might be top of mind.

Preventing infection: caring for caregivers

Certainly, aged care facilities and hospitals house vulnerable populations, making infection control paramount. Effective hand hygiene, surface cleaning and disinfecting are essential in preventing cross-contamination and person-to-person microbial transmission, thereby safeguarding patient health.

It is well known that healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) can lead to prolonged hospital stays, increased healthcare costs, adverse health outcomes and — tragically — even fatalities.

The significance of cleaning and disinfecting extends to caregivers and visitors too. Nurses, doctors and support staff are on the front lines of patient care; a clean and sanitary environment not only protects patients but also shields caregivers from unnecessary exposure to potential health risks.

As well as the benefits to these individuals, by prioritising staff health, institutions can maintain a stable workforce, reduce absenteeism and ensure consistent high-quality care.

Compassion through cleanliness

Beyond its health outcomes, good hygiene plays a pivotal role in preserving dignity and mental wellbeing.

Transitioning to an aged care facility or being admitted to a hospital can be immensely challenging, triggering emotions such as grief and anxiety due to loss of independence and familiar routines. And for families, there can be a mix of guilt and grief when deciding on care options for their loved ones. Thus, compassionate care for the elderly and unwell is an ethical imperative.

Here, good hygiene has an important role to play. For example, a clean and orderly environment promotes psychological wellbeing and an environment that is clean and nice smelling can help reduce that ‘institutional’ feel, promoting a sense of normalcy and comfort.

So, the ‘why’ for effective and compassionate cleaning in aged care and healthcare settings is

strong. The next step is the ‘how’. Achieving this requires effective cleaning products, practices and a compassionate approach tailored to the needs of these populations.

Products and equipment

Selecting the right products and equipment is crucial. When chosen correctly, they enable the core goals of cleanliness and infection prevention to be achieved.

Considerations could include whether a broad-spectrum or pathogen-specific disinfectant is appropriate and whether a product is suitable for specific surfaces or applications, such as food preparation.



Some additional considerations lean more towards compassionate product choices for aged care and healthcare settings. For example, the smell of the product — too strong, too unpleasant, too ‘institution-y’? What is its effect on indoor air quality (as residents and patients may spend extended periods indoors)?

What about hand hygiene products — are they easily dispensed and gentle on the skin to care for the additional needs of the elderly, the immunocompromised and frequent hand washers? Are vacuum cleaners and scrubbers too loud, interrupting rest or communal times?

Australia boasts an innovative institutional cleaning products industry that can cater to specific needs, even customising products when necessary.

Protocols and schedules

Hand in hand with effective products is correct product use. This begins with

adhering to manufacturer instructions (e.g., dilution, application, contact time and safety precautions) and any regulatory requirements or health authority guidelines.

Schedules and protocols for cleaning and disinfecting are a must. These should encompass the routine cleaning of high-touch surfaces, common areas, resident rooms and medical equipment, as well as address urgent cleaning needs due to spills or accidents and high-risk scenarios such as infection outbreaks.

There should also be procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of schedules and protocols and for their regular review so that best practice can be maintained.

Then there is training for cleaning staff. Comprehensive training should include the safe use of cleaning agents and equipment, proper cleaning techniques and safety measures to prevent, for example, slips and falls.

Training should also increase sensitivity to the needs and preferences of elderly residents and the infirm, including respect for privacy and belongings when cleaning resident rooms. Communication — with patients, residents and other staff members — is key.

Compassionate care benefits everyone

Facilities that consider all these factors as part of their cleaning and hygiene regimes will promote not just physical but also good mental health outcomes. Prioritising compassionate care — including through hygiene choices and practices — may result in lower readmission rates, greater staff retention and improved resident/patient satisfaction scores.

Thus, facilities will enjoy the reputational benefits that come from a holistic approach that upholds both health and dignity.



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