

**Abstract 10:**

**Infections among cleaning-staff working at the Teaching Hospital Jaffna and non-healthcare workplaces in the Jaffna Municipal Council area: An analytical study**

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**Background and objective:** Hospital cleaning-staff are exposed to a variety of potential infectious materials and are at a greater risk of acquiring infections than those working in non-healthcare settings. This study aimed to determine the risk of infection among the cleaning-staff of Teaching Hospital Jaffna, compared to cleaning-staff working in non-healthcare settings in the Jaffna Municipal Council area and the association between types of infections and work-related factors.

**Methods:** An institutional-based cross-sectional analytical study was conducted among two groups of cleaning-staff  $\geq 18$  years: those working at Teaching Hospital Jaffna and those working in non-healthcare settings in the Jaffna Municipal Council area. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was used to collect data including on self-reported infections. Associations between infections and work-related factors within both groups and differences in infections between the groups were determined. Chi-square test was performed to determine statistical significance; p value  $< 0.05$  was considered significant.

**Results:** In total, 100 cleaning-staff were recruited to each group. Infections reported among those working in healthcare settings were RTI (56%), UTI (22%), skin infections (21%) and gastrointestinal infections (8%). Infections reported by those working in non-healthcare settings were RTI (24%), UTI (24%), skin infections (21%) and gastrointestinal infections (12%). All participants in healthcare settings claimed they practiced proper handwashing and used personal protective equipment (PPE). In non-healthcare settings, 99% and 93% said they practiced proper handwashing and used PPE, respectively. Cleaning-staff working in healthcare settings were more likely to develop RTI compared to those who worked in non-healthcare settings ( $p=0.002$ ). In healthcare settings, those working for  $< 5$  years were more likely to report RTI ( $p=0.002$ ); exposure to body fluids was associated with skin infections ( $p=0.005$ ). In non-healthcare settings, the number of working hours was associated with RTI ( $p=0.019$ ).

**Conclusions and recommendations:** Cleaning-staff in healthcare settings may be at a greater risk of RTI than their counterparts in non-healthcare workplaces. Greater emphasis must be given on educating them about preventive measures for airborne infections.

**Keywords:** Cleaning-staff, Infection control, Healthcare workers, Occupational health