



The Medical **Bulletin**

In Infection

Sometimes Clinicians Can Be Part of the Infection Problem

Three Pittsburgh physicians conducted a nice study of what lurks on our stethoscope heads.

They imprinted stethoscope heads onto culture agar plates before and after cleaning the stethoscope heads with an alcohol-based hand foam.

There were 184 cultures, from 92 stethoscopes.

Colony counts of bacteria were significantly lower after the washes, and three methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) colonies were found in the pre-wash cultures, but not in the postwash cultures

Have we, all these years, simply assumed that handwashing was enough, and that our stethoscope heads somehow resisted bacterial contamination.

To what extent are our diagnostic instruments, and our clothing, part of the MRSA problem

1. Schroeder A, Schroeder MA, D'Amico FD. What's growing on your stethoscope? And what you can do about it. J Fam Pract. 2009;58(8):404–405.

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