

“Increasing medical students’ awareness of their habituated face-touching behavior and improving their understanding of self-inoculation as a route of transmission may help to improve hand hygiene compliance” Kwok et al (2015).

Reference:

Kwok, Y.L.A., Gralton, J. and McLaws, M-L. (2015) Face touching: A frequent habit that has implications for hand hygiene. American Journal of Infection Control. 43(2), p.112-114.

Abstract:

Background: There is limited literature on the frequency of face-touching behavior as a potential vector for the self-inoculation and transmission of Staphylococcus aureus and other common respiratory infections.

Methods: A behavioral observation study was undertaken involving medical students at the University of New South Wales. Their face-touching behavior was observed via videotape recording. Using standardized scoring sheets, the frequency of hand-to-face contacts with mucosal or nonmucosal areas was tallied and analyzed.

Results: On average, each of the 26 observed students touched their face 23 times per hour. Of all face touches, 44% (1,024/2,346) involved contact with a mucous membrane, whereas 56% (1,322/2,346) of contacts involved nonmucosal areas. Of mucous membrane touches observed, 36% (372) involved the mouth, 31% (318) involved the nose, 27% (273) involved the eyes, and 6% (61) were a combination of these regions.

Conclusion: Increasing medical students’ awareness of their habituated face-touching behavior and improving their understanding of self-inoculation as a route of transmission may help to improve hand hygiene compliance. Hand hygiene programs aiming to improve compliance with before and after patient contact should include a message that mouth and nose touching is a common practice. Hand hygiene is therefore an essential and inexpensive preventive method to break the colonization and transmission cycle associated with self-inoculation.

Thank you to our partners for supporting IVTEAM