
Abstract:

Background: Psychological models of behaviour A change have been found to be useful in predicting health-related behaviour in patients but have rarely been used in relation to the health behaviour of staff. This study explored the association between a range of psychological variables and self-reported handwashing in a sample of nurses who work in a large general hospital.

Method: A questionnaire-based cross-sectional, correlational study was used. Questionnaires examining demographics, self-efficacy, perceived importance of handwashing, perception of risk, occupational stress and training related to handwashing were administered to an opportunity sample (n = 76) of nurses drawn from an acute hospital. ANOVAs, correlation and regression analyses were performed to determine significant covariates of handwashing behaviour.

Findings: There was a weak relationship between demographic variables and self-reported handwashing. The degree to which employees perceived their workplace to assist handwashing and the perceived importance of handwashing were related to self-reported handwashing. Accordingly further covariates of these variables were sought. Training
received and occupational stress both covaried with nurses’ perceptions of the degree to which their workplace assisted handwashing. Nurses’ beliefs regarding the transmission of infections covaried with perceived importance of handwashing.

Conclusion: Occupational stress was observed to reduce the perception of having a supportive employer: organisations need to facilitate handwashing and protect staff from factors that have a detrimental impact, such as work-related stress. Nurses’ perceived importance of the potential for poor handwashing practice to contribute to the transmission of infections should be highlighted in interventions.

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