



# Evening Standard

## **Patients at risk from MRSA on hospitals' bins, pens and paper**

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DOCTORS' pens, phones and medical notes may harbour dangerous levels of MRSA that are being passed on to patients.

Research presented at the Health Protection Agency conference in Warwick shows that high levels of the bug are present on everyday items in hospitals.

Samples taken from an intensive care unit at a London hospital found MRSA on charts, bins, pens, phones and computer keyboards. There was also MRSA present on staff aprons and hands.

There are thought to be about 5,000 deaths a year from infections caught in hospitals but some experts believe the number could be as high as 20,000.

Dr Peter Wilson, consultant microbiologist at University College Hospital, said the most common route for MRSA infection was between patients or via a doctor or nurse. But he said that staff were likely to be spreading the bug by using phones or computers after having contact with patients.

"People touch these things without thinking but they need to wash their hands. These are things that don't get cleaned as often as they need to be," Dr Wilson said. Items on a general ward would probably be infected in the same way.

In another experiment, Dr Wilson found that if someone had MRSA on their hands they would leave the bacteria on the next four surfaces they touched. "Once the organism is stuck on to something, unless it is cleaned, it is there for 80 days," he said.