

# Assessing barriers regarding the use of isolation precautions among families and visitors in the Pediatric Intermediate Care Unit

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## Introduction

Patients frequently arrive to the Pediatric Intermediate Care Unit (PIMCU) and are immediately placed under isolation due to acute symptoms. It is rare that family members and visitors of patients adhere to our isolation policies.

The current policy of Penn State Hershey Medical Center states that “family members or visitors should wear gloves and a gown while performing personal care with potential for contact with bodily substances when the patient is on isolation precautions” (Penn State Hershey Medical Center, 2012). Our goal is to understand why families and visitors don’t follow our isolation guidelines and to implement different methods to overcome this issue in our unit.

## PICO Question

For families and visitors of patients in isolation precautions in the PIMCU (P), will assessing their barriers to isolation precautions (I) provide better compliance to HMC policy (O) compared to our current standards (C)?



[http://www.upi.com/Health\\_News/2011/12/02/Study-Good-childrens-hospital-food-rare/UPI-93871322808909/](http://www.upi.com/Health_News/2011/12/02/Study-Good-childrens-hospital-food-rare/UPI-93871322808909/)

## Methods

As a group, we conducted a systematic literature review using EBSCO Host and PubMed using the following key words: isolation, isolation contact, contact precautions, pediatric, visitors and infection.

From the results given we found four articles that directly related to our PICO question. In addition to these articles, we also referenced the current policy at Penn State Hershey Medical Center regarding isolation precautions.

**“Patients, family members, and visitors can be partners in preventing transmission of infections in healthcare settings.”**  
(Sigel, Rhinehart, Jackson, & Chiarello, 2012)

## Results

Educating caretakers and visitors is vital when implementing isolation precautions because family and visitors can help prevent the spread of infection.

According to Clock, “patient care staff had higher adherence rates for all contact precautions behaviors compared with staff and visitors” (Clock, p.107, 2010).

In addition, Cohen’s study discovered only 33% of visitors wore gowns and gloves when touching bodily fluids (Cohen, Hyman, Rosenberg & Larson, 2012).

## Discussion

The pediatric hospital that was used in Cohen’s study encourages but does not require protective equipment such as gowns and gloves for personal visitors because using these items can have a negative psychological impact on children in the hospital and can interfere with their routine family structures.

However, this study also proved that patient visitors who do not follow any isolation precautions are highly likely to spread infection. This is due to the fact that these visitors often come into contact with “clean” areas of the unit and could spread the isolated contaminants to these areas. This is a common occurrence in the PIMCU due to the fact that there are designated areas available for families and visitors to freely use, such as the teen lounge, playroom, and family nourishment rooms.



<http://www.medecoasia.com/uploaded/image/IG.jpg>

**“Isolation precautions are an important aspect of hospital infection control programs and are particularly important in pediatric settings given the high admission rates for viral respiratory (VRI) and gastrointestinal (VGI) infections” (Vayalunkal, 2007).**

## Conclusions

While we found definite results stating that families and visitors do not follow isolation precautions, there was not an abundance of information available related to educating families and visitors on infection control. Of the few articles we found, it was determined that families and other visitors need to be educated on isolation precautions prior to visiting patients. This will not only protect them, but also decrease the spread of potential infection on our unit

## Recommendations

Educate nurses on isolation precautions so that they can be more knowledgeable on the subject and able to educate the families of our patients.

Survey the nurses on our unit to determine if and how they educate patients’ families about isolation precautions.

Add information regarding isolation to the admission booklets that are given to families.

## References

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