Initiating Contact Precautions in the Emergency Department
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Introduction
The Center of Disease Control (CDC) states that transmission-based precautions should be initiated in the Emergency Department (ED). Transmission-based precautions include airborne, droplet, and contact. The ED is typically the first receiver of infected patients. When patients present to the ED with signs and symptoms of infections that are contagious and a threat to public health, particularly if the patient story in triage about how they may have contracted the illness warrants an increase level of suspicion.

PICO Question
P- Patients presenting to the ED with suspected need for precautions.
I- Early use of precautions
C- Universal precautions
O- Initiating precautions early in patient care

Question: Would initiating isolation precautions early in the patient's ER stay decrease the spread of infection?

Discussion
The Emergency department can be one of the busiest places in the hospital and more times then not not initiating precautions on patients can be overlooked in emergent situations. Research has given many examples as to why precautions may be overlooked by ED staff. Those reasons include:

- Not enough time ex. Codes/ Trauma
- Pt's assumed to be low risk
- Protective devices interfere with Skills
- Equipment not readily available
- Forgot to take precautions

* No support from peers to follow
* Lack of education when to initiate

Results- Emergency Department staff self-reported adherence to precautions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precaution</th>
<th>Number of perceived precautions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hand washing when in contact with body fluids</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand washing after contact with body fluids</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand washing practiced after patient contact, no body</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of gloves if hands may get bloody</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of gown when appropriate</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of mask if splashing with blood likely</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of goggles if splashing with blood likely</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions
More education is needed to staff on proper use of precautions, initiating Stat 15 one month based solely around isolation precautions.

Initiating use of isolation signs in triage, Having standard questions that should be asked by triage nurse to identify patients at risk for needing isolation. Supplying Triage with isolation signs that will be placed in the patients chart so that the sign can be directly placed on the outside of the door of the patients room upon arrival.

References