Increase in a Dutch Hospital of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus Related to Animal Farming

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In the Netherlands, patients exposed to pigs or farm animals were more and more likely to be carriers of methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), particularly on the intensive care units (ICUs) where they stayed longer. The risk of MRSA transmission was almost doubled when a patient was exposed to pigs or farm animals. The infection rate was highest in the ICU on the ward where the patients were exposed to pigs or farm animals.

Methods: A prospective survey was performed during 2001-2002 in six hospitals, which included four tertiary care hospitals, one teaching hospital, and one general hospital. The survey included all patients who were actively screened for MRSA colonization at the time of admission. The surveillance cultures were taken at least twice a week until discharge or death. The results were compared with those of a previous study conducted in 1997-1998.

Results: During 2001-2002, 56 cases of MRSA carriage were identified, compared with 27 cases in 1997-1998. The proportion of MRSA-positive patients was significantly higher in the ICU on the ward where the patients were exposed to pigs or farm animals. The infection rate was highest in the ICU on the ward where the patients were exposed to pigs or farm animals. The infection rate was highest in the ICU on the ward where the patients were exposed to pigs or farm animals.

Conclusions: The increase in MRSA carriage in the ICU on the ward where the patients were exposed to pigs or farm animals suggests a role for animal contact in the transmission of MRSA. Further studies are needed to identify the mechanisms by which MRSA is transmitted from animals to humans and to develop strategies to prevent MRSA transmission in animal-assisted settings.