Reviewer’s report

Title: Residential care homes for elderly are more important than hospitals in the transmission of methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus

Version: 1  Date: 7 October 2012

Reviewer: Adam L Gordon

Reviewer’s report:

The authors present a longitudinal cohort study comparing the prevalence and incidence of MRSA in care home-dwelling and non-care home dwelling elders within the Hong Kong Healthcare System. Their methodology is sound and their results are clearly and transparently reported but the report has one major shortcoming which I would suggest is rectified prior to acceptance for publication:

The residential care sector around the world varies along a continuum from highly socialised long-term care (the UK is at this end of the spectrum) through to highly medicalised long-term care (the USA is at this end of the spectrum). At the socialised end of the spectrum, residents live in small (circa 21 resident) house-style accommodations, with individual rooms, carpeted living conditions, no regular nursing input, and low levels of instrumentation, apart from long-term catheters. Feeding tubes would not be routine. Other forms of medical intervention would not be allowed to take place. At the other end of the spectrum, residents are cared for large (circa 200 resident) hospital-style accommodation, with hospital-style furnishings, with routine nursing input and high levels of instrumentation up to, and including, tracheostomy.

To understand the broader applicability of the research presented here, we have to understand what Hong Kong RCHE’s are in some more detail and where they lie on this spectrum.

- How big are the facilities?
- Do residents have private rooms with en-suite bathrooms or do they share toilets?
- Is nursing care provided by on-site staff, or visiting professionals?
- What type of medical instrumentation is accepted and what proportion of residents have catheters/feeding tubes/tracheostomy tubes/etc?

Once I can understand the answers to the above, I can understand whether this research applies to the UK, the Netherlands, the USA, Australasia, Taiwan......without such exposition on the nature of the facility considered, it becomes difficult to interpret or extrapolate the findings outside the relatively limited setting of Hong Kong.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.