

Good practice examples from Swedish hospitals on restricted usage of silver and triclosan

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Start 2000

- Nurse calling: What shall we do about the silver products?
- We bought silver products for several hundred thousand euros but did not know how to handle or use them

The Swedish Environmental Management Council

- Swedish government's expert body on environmental and other sustainable procurement
- Support the public, business and third sector
- Development of a checklist for silver-based dressings

Checklist

- Information on the form of silver (metal, ion, nanoparticle)
- The amount of silver in the product (mg/cm²)
- The amount of other toxic heavy metals (often remnants of lead and mercury from the manufacturing process)
- If and how much silver is released into the wound (no release, no biocidal effect in the wound)

Checklist cont.

- The minimum inhibitory concentrations for the bacteria the product is targeting, and a 3-log killing, at least, should be reported
- If there is a time limit for the use of the product (2-3 weeks)
- The clinical effects of the product have to be documented in randomized controlled studies (in vitro experiments or case reports are not enough)

Checklist cont.

- Recommendations about how to take care of the waste products
- The checklist was flatly refused by the manufacturers – the demands were “unrealistic”

Public purchasers

- Nationwide lectures: stopped/restricted use, only after prescription
- Regional tour to four hospitals: has saved approximately 50,000 euros/year
- Repeated contacts with Apoteksbolaget AB (earlier state-owned drug stores): withdrawal of all silver-based band-aids

Massmedia

- Interviews in TV, radio, newspapers
- Scientific conferences and papers
- Report from the Swedish Council on Technology Assessment in Health Care: no evidence of the usefulness of silver-based wound dressings on chronic leg ulcers
- What you do with one biocide can usually be applied on others

Information is crucial

- The market plays on our fears for bacteria, but the fears are misdirected, making bad worse
- We should not fight bacteria but learn how to interact with them
- Keep your homes free from biocides. (It is easier to select the bad bugs than the good ones)
- If a solution appears too simple, it usually is
- Do not stop asking questions