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WHO ISSUES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTING CATHETER-ASSOCIATED INFECTIONS

The World Health Organization (WHO) has published guidelines aiming to prevent bloodstream infections caused by **peripheral intravenous catheters (PIVC)**.

Given that up to 70% of hospitalized patients require the use of a catheter inserted into a peripheral vein or artery, WHO states that improper practices in the insertion, maintenance, and removal of PIVCs carry a high risk of bloodstream contamination. This can lead to life-threatening conditions such as **sepsis** and difficult-to-treat complications in vital organs, especially when infections are caused by **antibiotic-resistant bacteria**.

The burden of these infections is significant, WHO estimating that from 2000 to 2018, the average mortality among patients with healthcare-associated sepsis was 24.4%, and a double rate of 52.3% among patients in intensive care units.

WHO considers that catheter-associated bloodstream infections are among the most preventable healthcare-associated infections,

provided that proper procedures are followed by medical practitioners.

The **guidelines** are evidence-based and include 14 best practice statements and 23 recommendations focusing on the education and training of healthcare workers, aseptic techniques and hand hygiene, catheter selection and insertion, proper PIVC maintenance, access, and removal.

Healthcare-associated infections represent a **preventable** tragedy and a serious threat to the quality and **safety** of healthcare, according to the WHO Deputy Director-General for Health Care.

Implementing recommendations on proper care and infection prevention & control is essential for saving lives and alleviating a great deal of avoidable suffering faced by people worldwide.

Adapted after Chris Dall, 09 May 2024

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