

ACADEMY OF SPINAL CORD INJURY PROFESSIONALS



Sustainable Practices in Infection Control: Increased Staff Satisfaction with Reusable Gowns and Reducing Isolation in the Gym

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Introduction

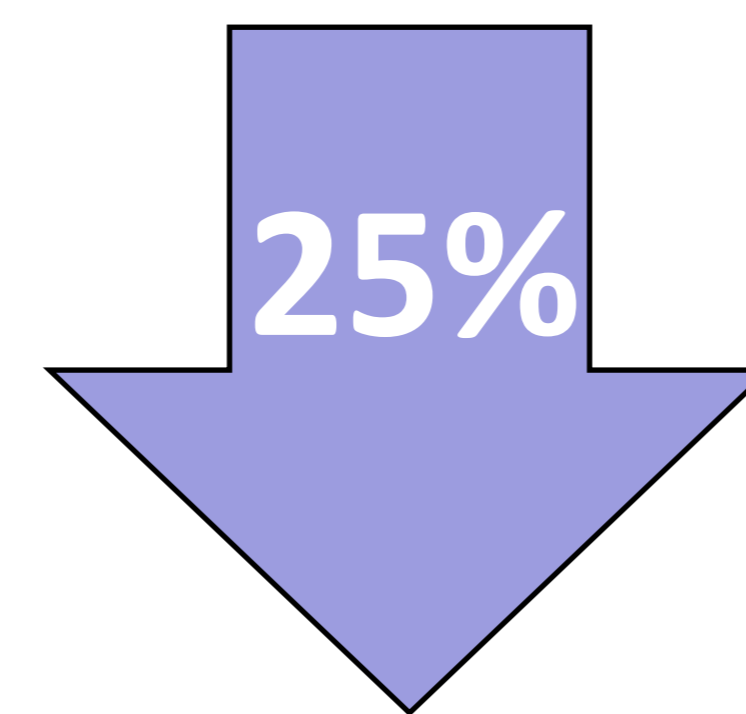
Following the acquisition of a neurological rehabilitation hospital by a large academic health system, new infection control protocols were implemented, including the mandatory use of disposable gowns for patients colonized with MRSA. These changes disrupted established practices in the therapy gym and raised concerns among staff about comfort, workflow efficiency, and environmental sustainability. Staff dissatisfaction with disposable gowns, coupled with emerging evidence suggesting that MRSA-colonized patients may not require contact precautions in therapy gyms, prompted the hospital to explore sustainable alternatives. This initiative aimed to reduce unnecessary isolation and transition to reusable gowns, addressing both staff well-being and environmental impact.

Methods

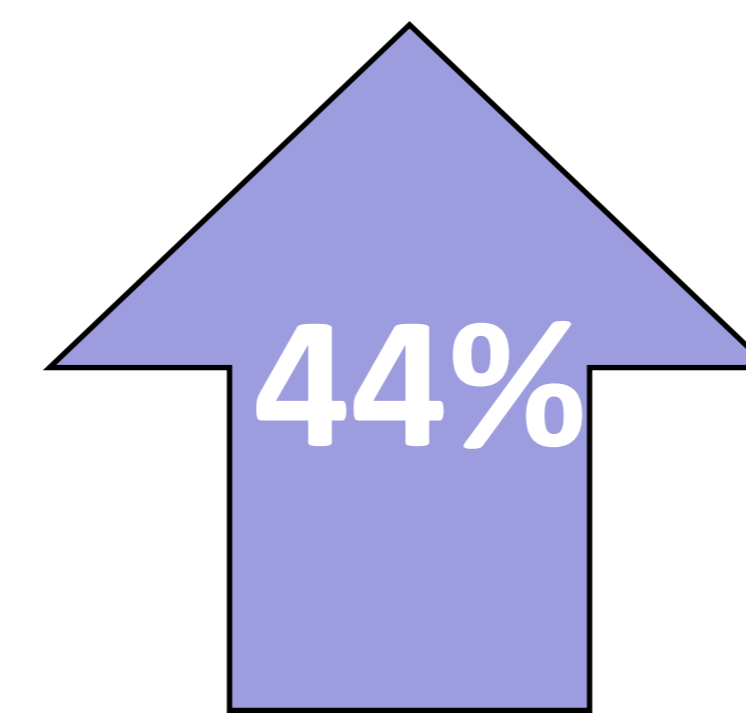
A comprehensive assessment informed the intervention, including a literature review on MRSA isolation practices, environmental impact analysis of PPE, and staff surveys on gown satisfaction. Stakeholder engagement, cost modeling, and vendor evaluations led to the selection of a reusable gown product. A pilot program tested feasibility and effectiveness in a selected unit, followed by training, communication efforts, and full-scale rollout. Throughout the process, staff input, laundering logistics, and infection control compliance were prioritized. Health equity considerations ensured that the intervention supported the needs of patients requiring prolonged rehab stays while promoting environmentally conscious care.

Results

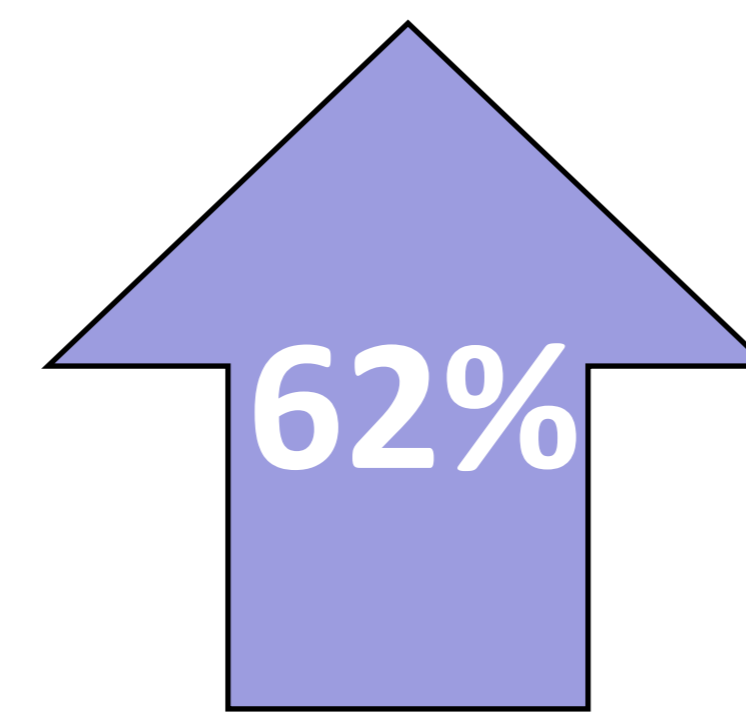
Post-intervention surveys showed marked improvement in staff satisfaction with reusable gowns, with a 44% increase in perceived clothing protection and a 62% improvement in perceived job performance. Analysis also found that, on average, 25% of patients under contact isolation in the gym were colonized with MRSA and no longer required isolation, reducing unnecessary PPE use. These changes led to better staff comfort, improved workflow, and enhanced sustainability without compromising infection control. The success of the pilot informed the broader facility-wide implementation, demonstrating that environmentally sustainable practices can be compatible with clinical effectiveness and staff support.



Unnecessary MRSA isolation in the gym decreased by 25%.



Reusable gowns: 44% increase in staff confidence in clothing protection.



Reusable gowns: 62% boost in staff's perceived job performance.

Conclusion

This initiative illustrates how infection control protocols can be improved through sustainable, evidence-based, and staff-centered approaches. Replacing disposable gowns with reusable alternatives reduced environmental harm, improved staff satisfaction, and streamlined therapy operations by eliminating unnecessary MRSA-related isolation. The structured implementation, stakeholder engagement, and adaptability make the model suitable for replication in similar healthcare settings. Ongoing monitoring and staff feedback remain essential to sustaining success. Ultimately, the initiative reinforces the importance of aligning infection prevention strategies with environmental stewardship and workforce well-being in modern healthcare.

References

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