



Published in final edited form as:

J Pediatr. 2011 June ; 158(6): 1039. doi:10.1016/j.jpeds.2011.01.020.

Changes Over Time in Caregivers' Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors Regarding MRSA

Jessica J. Briggs, B.S.¹ and Aaron M. Milstone, MD, MHS^{1,2}

¹Department of Pediatrics, Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland ²The Johns Hopkins Hospital, Department of Hospital Epidemiology and Infection Control, Baltimore, Maryland

Keywords

Staphylococcus aureus; Methicillin-resistance; Knowledge; Attitudes; Caregivers; Pediatrics

The national prevalence of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in children is rising, but little is known about the long term outcomes associated with MRSA infection and colonization in hospitalized children. We previously found that caregivers worry and feel social isolation and stigma when their children received a diagnosis of MRSA infection or colonization.[1] We conducted a six-month follow-up phone survey to assess changes in caregiver knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in children previously colonized or infected with MRSA.

Of 100 caregivers contacted, 58 (58%) were reached and administered the questionnaire. Eleven (19%) remained unaware that their child had ever been colonized or infected with MRSA. Of the 47 caregivers that knew their child had MRSA, 62% were worried about the risk of future MRSA infection in their child. Forty caregivers had been aware of their child's MRSA status six months prior and had paired data regarding attitudes for comparison. Of these 40 caregivers, 85% had originally been worried about the risk of future MRSA infection in their child, and 60% remained worried about future MRSA infections six months later.

Twenty-one of 47 caregivers (45%) reported "doing something differently because of MRSA." The most common behaviors reported were increased use of hand sanitizer, increased hand washing, separating a child's belongings, and using Lysol or bleach for cleaning. Seven percent reported that having MRSA affected their child's daily activities, and 10% reported that having MRSA affected their child at school.

Many caregivers (34%) reported still wanting more information about MRSA. Some mentioned using the internet to supplement their knowledge of MRSA while others mentioned wanting to know how to prevent future infections. However, despite these worries and the desire for more information, only 7% reported calling the doctor with questions about MRSA, and 7% had taken their child to the doctor because of questions about MRSA.

Corresponding author: Aaron M. Milstone, M.D., M.H.S. Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine 200 North Wolfe St. / Rubenstein 3141 Baltimore, MD 21287 Phone : 443-287-8932 Fax : 410-614-1491 amilsto1@jhmi.edu.

Conflict of Interest There are no potential conflicts of interest. There was no payment to produce this manuscript.

Caregiver's worries about their child's MRSA declined over time (85 % to 60%), but the majority of caregivers still had worries about MRSA, and almost half reported changing at least one behavior at home in response to their child's MRSA status.

Overall, caregivers' concerns persisted over time and healthcare providers need to more fully address these concerns when they inform caregivers of their child's MRSA status. This study highlights the need for more research to determine how to best inform and reassure caregivers about MRSA.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Arnab Sengupta and Cynthia Rand for their contributions to this study. This study was supported by K23AI081752 from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) to A.M.M.. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of NIAID or the NIH.

Financial Disclosures: This work was supported by NIH/NIAID (1 K23 AI081752-01 to A.M.). The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of NIAID or the NIH. A.M. receives grant support from Sage Products and BioMerieux.

Abbreviations

MRSA Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*

References

- [1]. Sengupta A, Rand C, Perl TM, Milstone AM. Knowledge, Awareness, and Attitudes Regarding Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* among Caregivers of Hospitalized Children. *J Pediatr.* 2010