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Evaluating Decontamination Methods For Mobile Devices

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1. Introduction

- The use of mobile devices within healthcare settings by staff, patients and visitors is widespread and growing.
- Department of Health guidance states that patients should be allowed the widest possible use of mobile phones (DH, 2009).
- For staff, mobile devices have become an essential aspect of their day-to-day professional and personal lives.
- There is, however, clear evidence that phones/tablets can be contaminated with pathogens, which may survive for prolonged periods before being transferred onto hands or other surfaces (White et al, 2012).
- This quantitative study evaluates the ability of a range of technologies to decontaminate iPads.

2. Methods

- The front, back and sides of iPads were contaminated with a standard suspension of *Staphylococcus aureus*.
- Half of these surfaces were sampled to provide pre-values, whilst the other half was decontaminated with either alcohol wipes, detergent wipes, quaternary ammonium impregnated wipes, or exposure to Ultraviolet light for either 30 or 60 seconds.
- As a control, a microfibre cloth impregnated with sterile water was also tested.

3. Results

- Alcohol based wipes were most effective, generating on average a 2.3 log reduction on the back of the iPad and a 3.3 log reduction on the front.
- The cleaning of the front surface of the iPad was consistently easier to clean than the back.
- However, all of the wipes were less effective than UV exposure, where a 60 second exposure generated a 4.0 log reduction on the front and a 3.8 log reduction on the back.

4. Discussion

- The results indicate that commercial wipes are unable to effectively decontaminate the high touch surfaces of an iPad.
- However, the application of a UV decontamination technology was a much more effective method for the removal of bacteria from these surfaces.
- This suggests that UV based decontamination technology would provide a quick, efficient and economical method for the disinfection of mobile devices such as iPads in healthcare settings.

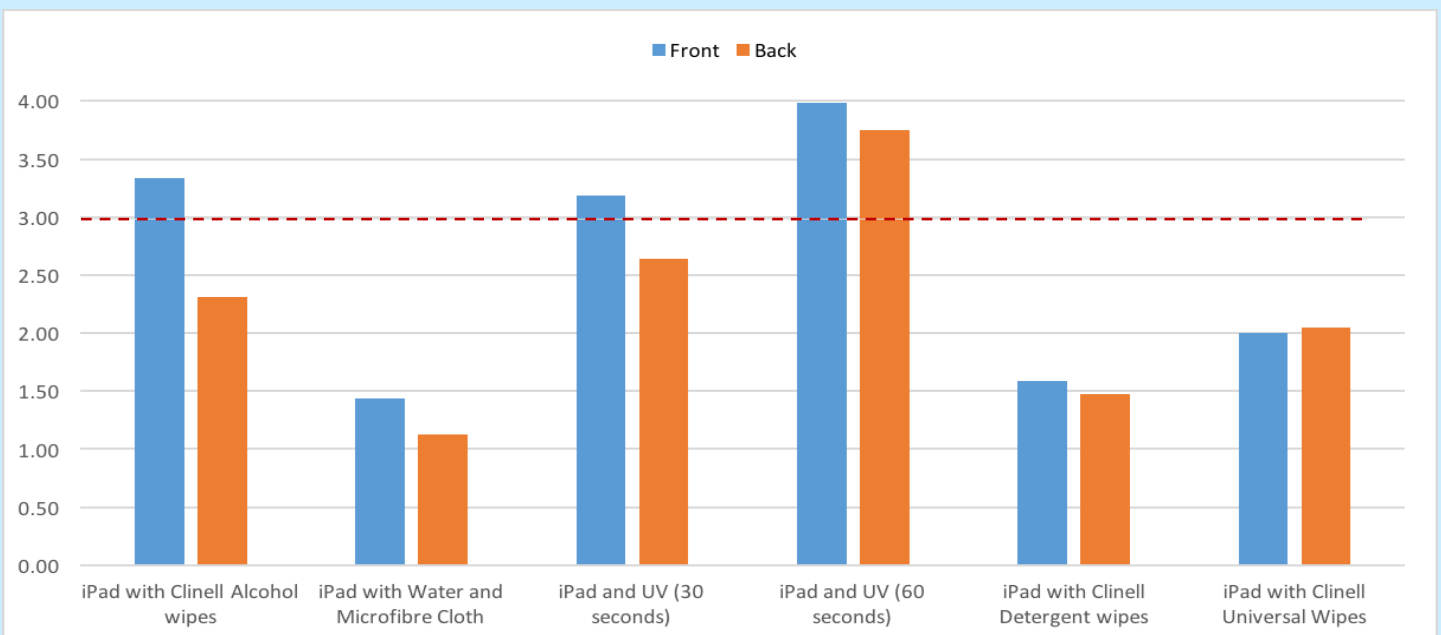


Fig. 1: Average Log reduction of *Staphylococcus aureus* on the front and back of the iPad after treatment.

References

1. DH (2009) Using mobile phones in NHS hospitals. London, Stationery Office.
2. White, S., Topping, A., Humphreys, P., Rout, S., & Williamson, H. (2012). The cross-contamination potential of mobile telephones. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 17(6), 582-595. doi:10.1177/1744987112458670