

Legionella and Pseudomonas Control in Healthcare

The Department of Health Estates and Facilities Division publishes guidance for engineering practices for the NHS in the Health Technical Memorandum series, including HTM 04-01: Safe water in healthcare premises. The scope of the document now goes beyond Legionella control. The 2016 edition of HTM 04-01 includes control of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* and *Mycobacteria* as well as Legionella. Non-NHS healthcare facilities are well advised to look to the HTMs in this developing area of infection control.

Some care needs to be taken in determining how to risk assess different waterborne pathogens. Attempting to assess both Legionella and Pseudomonas in the same exercise may cause confusion and make devising the Water Safety Plan difficult. Legionella has traditionally been seen as the responsibility of the engineering department, with the correct installation and operation of pipework, water tanks and hot water systems as central to control. The emphasis is very much on implementing the correct engineering and control programme first, verified by Legionella testing throughout the system coming afterwards.

By contrast, Pseudomonas is problematic in different parts of the system, in the environment around taps and showers as well as within the pipework and plant itself. It is also a much greater threat to some patients than others, so that the assessment will concentrate on specific areas identified by patient profile. Tests for Pseudomonas play quite a different role to those for Legionella. Pseudomonas tests are used early on in the assessment to identify risk areas – which is a continuous process. The control programme will also be discussed with and communicated to different members of staff than those involved in Legionella control. The ward cleaning regime, the design and operation of wash-basin and preparation areas will all be considered.

The infection control team, nursing and cleaning staff must be consulted in the development of the Pseudomonas control strategy, with duties and responsibilities well defined. It should be clear where the work of the engineering team ends, if they are not to take the blame for an outbreak. The spread of Pseudomonas may have as much to do with the cleanliness of tap heads and surfaces as the temperatures of hot and cold water and basin design.