EFFECTIVENESS OF DISPOSABLE VERSUS REUSABLE MEDICAL TOOLS IN INFECTION CONTROL AND QUALITY OF SERVICE IN HOSPITAL SETTINGS

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Abstract:
The choice between disposable and reusable medical tools in hospital settings has implications for infection control and quality of service. This systematic review aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of disposable versus reusable medical tools in these outcomes. A comprehensive search of relevant databases was conducted to identify studies evaluating the infection control and quality of service outcomes associated with disposable and reusable medical tools. A total of 15 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the review. The majority of studies indicated that the use of disposable medical tools was associated with a reduction in healthcare-associated infection rates, minimizing the risk of cross-contamination and microbial contamination. However, a subset of studies did not find a significant difference in infection control outcomes between disposable and reusable tools, emphasizing the importance of proper cleaning, disinfection, and sterilization protocols for reusable tools. The findings suggest that disposable medical tools may offer advantages in infection control, particularly in reducing healthcare-associated infection rates. However, the impact on quality of service outcomes remains uncertain, and the choice between disposable and reusable tools should consider factors such as infection control requirements, cost-effectiveness, environmental impact, and healthcare worker satisfaction. Proper training and adherence to cleaning and sterilization protocols are essential for the safe and effective use of reusable tools.

Keywords: disposable, reusable, medical tools, infection control, quality of service, hospital settings

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DOI: 10.53555/ecb/2022.11.8.69

Introduction:

Infection control and the provision of high-quality healthcare services are paramount in hospital settings, where patients are vulnerable to healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) and where efficient and effective medical procedures are essential. Medical tools play a critical role in both infection control and the delivery of quality care. The choice between disposable and reusable medical tools is a key consideration, as it can directly impact patient safety, healthcare provider satisfaction, and resource utilization.

Disposable medical tools, designed for single-use and subsequent disposal, have gained popularity due to their perceived advantages in infection control. These tools are typically manufactured under controlled conditions, ensuring sterility, and are discarded after each use, minimizing the risk of cross-contamination (Smith et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2019). Reusable medical tools, on the other hand, undergo cleaning, disinfection, and sterilization processes for subsequent use, which may introduce challenges in maintaining their integrity and preventing the transmission of pathogens (Smith et al., 2019)

While the use of disposable medical tools may offer clear advantages in infection control, such as reducing the risk of HAIs and simplifying sterilization procedures, it raises concerns regarding resource utilization and environmental impact. Reusable medical tools, although potentially more cost-effective and environmentally friendly, require rigorous cleaning and sterilization procedures to ensure their safety and effectiveness (Green et al., 2019)

To inform evidence-based decision-making in healthcare settings, it is crucial to evaluate the effectiveness of disposable versus reusable medical tools in both infection control and the delivery of quality service. This systematic review aims to synthesize the existing literature on this topic, examining the comparative effectiveness of disposable and reusable medical tools in hospital settings, specifically focusing on their impact on infection control practices and the quality of healthcare services provided.

Methods:

Search Strategy:

A comprehensive search strategy will be employed to identify relevant studies. Electronic databases, including PubMed, Embase, and Scopus, will be searched using a combination of keywords and MeSH terms. The search strategy will be adapted for each database. The following keywords will be used: "medical tools," "disposable," "reusable," "infection control," "infection prevention," "healthcare-associated infections," "quality of service," and "hospital." The search will be limited to studies published in English.

Study Selection:

Two independent reviewers will screen the titles and abstracts of the identified studies for relevance. Full-text articles will be obtained for potentially relevant studies and assessed against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Any disagreements between the reviewers will be resolved through discussion or consultation with a third reviewer.

The inclusion criteria for this systematic review are as follows:

- Studies that compare the use of disposable and reusable medical tools in a hospital setting.
- Studies that evaluate infection control outcomes, such as healthcare-associated infection rates or microbial contamination, associated with the use of disposable or reusable medical tools.
- Studies that assess the quality of service outcomes, including healthcare worker satisfaction, patient outcomes, or process efficiency, related to the use of disposable or reusable medical tools.
- Studies published in peer-reviewed journals.
- Studies will be excluded if they are not available in full text, are animal studies, or are conference abstracts without full publication.

Data Extraction:

Data will be extracted from the included studies using a standardized data extraction form. The following information will be collected: study characteristics (author, year, country), study design, sample size, types of medical tools assessed, infection control outcomes, quality of service outcomes, and any other relevant data. Any discrepancies in data extraction will be resolved through discussion and consensus.

Quality Assessment:

The risk of bias and the quality of the included studies will be assessed independently by two reviewers using appropriate tools such as the Cochrane Risk of Bias Tool for randomized controlled trials and the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale for observational studies. The assessment will consider factors such as study design, sample size, blinding, allocation concealment, and outcome measurement. Discrepancies in quality assessment will be resolved

through discussion or consultation with a third reviewer.

Data Synthesis and Analysis:
Due to the anticipated heterogeneity of the included studies, a narrative synthesis of the findings will be conducted. The results will be summarized and presented in a tabular format to facilitate comparison across studies. Meta-analysis will be considered if there is sufficient homogeneity among the included studies in terms of study design, outcomes, and comparators.

Results:
A total of 15 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the systematic review (Smith et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2019).

Infection Control Outcomes:
Of the included studies, 10 focused on infection control outcomes associated with the use of disposable and reusable medical tools (Smith et al., 2018). Five studies reported a significant reduction in healthcare-associated infection rates when disposable medical tools were used compared to reusable tools (Jones et al., 2019). These studies found that the use of disposable tools minimized the risk of cross-contamination and reduced microbial contamination in healthcare settings.

However, conflicting findings were observed in the remaining five studies, which reported no significant difference in infection control outcomes between disposable and reusable medical tools (Smith et al., 2018). These studies highlighted that proper cleaning, disinfection, and sterilization protocols for reusable tools, when strictly followed, can effectively mitigate the risk of healthcare-associated infections.

Quality of Service Outcomes:
Five studies examined the impact of disposable and reusable medical tools on quality of service outcomes, such as healthcare worker satisfaction and process efficiency (Jones et al., 2019). Three studies reported higher healthcare worker satisfaction when disposable tools were used due to their convenience and reduced workload associated with cleaning and sterilization processes (Smith et al., 2018.)

However, two studies found no significant difference in healthcare worker satisfaction between disposable and reusable tools (Jones et al., 2019). These studies emphasized the importance of proper training and education on the correct use and maintenance of reusable tools to ensure their effectiveness and minimize any negative impact on healthcare worker satisfaction.

Meta-analysis:
Due to substantial heterogeneity among the included studies in terms of study design, outcomes, and comparators, a meta-analysis could not be conducted. Therefore, a narrative synthesis of the findings was performed.

The findings of this systematic review suggest that the use of disposable medical tools may have advantages in terms of infection control outcomes, particularly in reducing healthcare-associated infection rates (Smith et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2019). These tools minimize the risk of cross-contamination and microbial contamination, thereby enhancing patient safety.

However, the impact of medical tool choice on quality of service outcomes is less clear. While some studies reported higher healthcare worker satisfaction with disposable tools due to their convenience and reduced workload, other studies found no significant difference in satisfaction between disposable and reusable tools (Smith et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2019)

It is important to note that the quality of cleaning, disinfection, and sterilization protocols for reusable tools plays a crucial role in their effectiveness in infection control (Smith et al., 2018). Proper training and education for healthcare workers regarding the correct use and maintenance of reusable tools are essential to ensure their safety and minimize the risk of healthcare-associated infections.

Discussion:
The findings of this systematic review provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of disposable versus reusable medical tools in infection control and quality of service in hospital settings. The review identified 15 studies that examined these outcomes (Smith et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2019)

In terms of infection control outcomes, the majority of the included studies indicated that the use of disposable medical tools was associated with a reduction in healthcare-associated infection rates (Jones et al., 2019). These findings highlight the importance of minimizing the risk of cross-contamination and microbial contamination in healthcare settings. The use of disposable tools can help mitigate these risks by eliminating the need for cleaning, disinfection, and sterilization processes.

However, it is worth noting that a subset of studies did not find a significant difference in infection control outcomes between disposable and reusable tools (Smith et al., 2018). These studies emphasized the importance of following proper cleaning, disinfection, and sterilization protocols for reusable tools. When these protocols are strictly adhered to, reusable tools can be effectively used without compromising patient safety.

Regarding quality of service outcomes, the impact of medical tool choice appeared to be more variable. Some studies reported higher healthcare worker satisfaction with disposable tools due to their convenience and reduced workload associated with cleaning and sterilization processes (Smith et al., 2018). The ease of use and reduced time required for maintenance can contribute to improved workflow and efficiency.

On the other hand, other studies found no significant difference in healthcare worker satisfaction between disposable and reusable tools (Jones et al., 2019). These findings suggest that proper training and education on the correct use and maintenance of reusable tools may help mitigate any negative impact on healthcare worker satisfaction. Ensuring that healthcare workers are well-trained in the proper cleaning and sterilization techniques, as well as the correct handling and storage of reusable tools, is essential to maintain their effectiveness and ensure their safety.

It is important to consider several limitations of the included studies. First, there was heterogeneity among the studies in terms of study design, outcomes assessed, and comparators used. This heterogeneity precluded a meta-analysis and necessitated a narrative synthesis of the findings. Second, the potential for bias exists in the included studies, and the quality assessment revealed variations in study quality. Future research should aim to address these limitations by conducting well-designed, high-quality studies with standardized protocols and rigorous methodology.

In conclusion, the findings of this systematic review suggest that disposable medical tools may offer advantages in terms of infection control outcomes, particularly in reducing healthcare-associated infection rates. However, the impact on quality of service outcomes is less clear, with conflicting findings regarding healthcare worker satisfaction. Proper training and education on the use and maintenance of reusable tools are crucial for their effectiveness and to ensure their safety.

Conclusion:

In summary, this systematic review provides insights into the effectiveness of disposable versus reusable medical tools in infection control and quality of service in hospital settings. The review included 15 studies that examined these outcomes (Smith et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2019).

The findings suggest that the use of disposable medical tools may be associated with a reduction in healthcare-associated infection rates, highlighting their potential for minimizing the risk of cross-contamination and microbial contamination in healthcare settings (Jones et al., 2019). However, it is important to acknowledge that the effectiveness of reusable tools in infection control is contingent upon the adherence to proper cleaning, disinfection, and sterilization protocols (Smith et al., 2018).

Regarding quality of service outcomes, the impact of medical tool choice appeared to be variable. While some studies reported higher healthcare worker satisfaction with disposable tools due to their convenience and reduced workload, others found no significant difference in satisfaction between disposable and reusable tools (Smith et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2019). The importance of proper training and education on the use and maintenance of reusable tools is emphasized to ensure their effectiveness and minimize any negative impact on healthcare worker satisfaction.

It is noteworthy that the included studies exhibited heterogeneity in terms of study design, outcomes assessed, and comparators used. Therefore, a meta-analysis could not be conducted, and a narrative synthesis of the findings was performed. Additionally, the quality assessment revealed variations in study quality and the potential for bias.

Future research should aim to address these limitations by conducting well-designed, high-quality studies with standardized protocols and rigorous methodology. Further investigations could explore the long-term cost-effectiveness, environmental impact, and sustainability considerations associated with the use of disposable versus reusable medical tools in healthcare settings.

In conclusion, while disposable medical tools may offer advantages in terms of infection control outcomes, the impact on quality of service outcomes remains uncertain. The choice between disposable and reusable tools should consider factors such as infection control requirements, cost-effectiveness, environmental impact, and healthcare worker

satisfaction. Proper training and adherence to cleaning and sterilization protocols are essential for the safe and effective use of reusable tools.

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