

Unexpected Consequences of a Well-Intended “Fix”

The Problem

In preparation for the 2004 Joint Commission triennial survey, we noticed that there was a pattern of clean supplies being stored under the sinks in patient care areas. This was a violation of infection control standards.

Aim/Goal

- To eliminate storage under sinks in patient care areas across BIDMC
- To comply with Joint Commission recommendation to improve adherence to Infection Control standards

The Team

Pat Folcarelli, Health Care Quality;
Richard Marini, Maintenance Operations;
Brendan Raftery, Maintenance Operations;
Gary Schweon, Environmental Health and Safety;
Linda Baldini, Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology;
Kim Sulmonte, Patient Care Services

The Interventions

- The Joint Commission prep team made a decision to bolt down all of the cabinets to prevent under sink storage.
- All cabinets under the sinks were bolted down



Example of Bolted Cabinets underneath sinks in patient care areas

The Results/Progress to Date

- BIDMC had three successful Joint Commission visits - with no findings related to under sink storage.
- We also began to notice that we were unable to clean under the sinks or to respond in a timely fashion to leaks and that when we did – there was an apparent build up of mold under the sinks behind the bolted doors! We did not anticipate this!



Leaks under sink and mold build up inside cabinet

Lessons Learned

Interventions require a mechanism for monitoring and routinely checking back to fully appreciate the downstream effect of the intervention.

Next Steps

We are bolting all of the cabinets and cleaning/repairing the areas under the sinks. We are working with our staff to reinforce the reasons for not storing supplies under the sinks.

