



News Release

Time to move Mr and Mrs Mop to the top of our society

A recent pay offer of between 11-13% to hospital cleaners should mark the beginning of a concerted campaign to value the cleaning profession – claims a charity chief.

Cleaners ensure that schools and colleges can function, businesses run, streets are not knee-deep in rubbish and rats, crime and trauma scenes are cleansed and deadly hospital infections such as MRSA don't spread.

But instead of being hailed as heroes, the tired old image of Hilda Ogden with her curlers, mop and bucket pervades – says Professor Colin Garner, the Chief Executive of the World's only charity dedicated to fighting superbugs, Antibiotic Research UK (ANTRUK).

"Cleaning is one of the most important jobs in our society and without it, literally everything would shut down" said Garner, "yet it receives little recognition and is often poorly paid. Completed in unsociable hours, the impact and importance of our cleaners is not seen or appreciated – or perhaps it is just that the public is snobby about the profession and indeed any job where people work with their hands."

UK cleaners are often taken to the cleaners when it comes to financial rewards, with the average wage being just £7.27 per hour (1). Experience counts for nothing with long service rarely rewarded. Hours can be long and physical and contracts tend to be short-term or even zero hours.

When it comes to hospitals and other healthcare facilities though, good cleaning is a matter of life and death, argues Garner. "Deadly superbugs such as MRSA and C-difficile can be spread if we do not keep hygiene levels high. That involves making sure that potentially contaminated surfaces such as the toilet, flush handle, sinks, taps, light switches and door handles are cleansed thoroughly and that visitors and healthcare professionals have access to hand sanitizers and gel."

ANTRUK has welcomed the news that NHS cleaners are to receive a significant pay rise to both retain and recruit the best crop of cleaners to the profession. They have also saluted hospital trusts who have recently committed to improving their infection control practices. With evidence suggesting that the use of antibacterials in cleaning products could be helping to promote antibiotic resistance (2), they have called for more research to be done into cleaning products. Most of all, they want the public to act as vigilant visitors when they go and see loved ones in hospital and to report incidents of poor cleansing to hospital authorities.

Continued Colin: “It is refreshing to hear hospital trusts actively encouraging the public to play their part by keeping their hands clean, dressing any wounds they might have before they step foot on a ward and instructing them NOT to be afraid of highlighting dirty hand rails or messy toilets to the authorities. This is particularly important at this time when hospitals are busy places and healthcare staff are simply unable to spot poor cleaning.”

Colin Garner concluded: “And I think we could all just take a minute out to remember who it is that enables our hospital to function properly. Doctors, nurses, even receptionists receive our acclaim. We should add cleaners to that list, for carrying out this most important, difficult and sometimes dirty job.”

Aside from promoting good hygiene to stop the spread of superbugs, ANTRUK works to secure funding to research and develop new medications to replace our increasingly redundant antibiotics. To learn more about them and join that fight, visit <https://www.antibioticresearch.org.uk/>

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For further information

Please contact Peter Gibson on 0759 202 8142 or email peter.gibson@antibioticresearch.org.uk

Learn more about Antibiotic Research UK (ANTRUK) at www.antibioticresearch.org.uk

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References:

- (1) https://www.payscale.com/research/UK/Job=Cleaner/Hourly_Rate
- (2) <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/antibacterial-cleaning-products>