

Prevention of Airborne Contagion in the Clinical Setting -- Principles and Practices -- an international perspective

Ugis Bickis

Capital Region Office
2 Saginaw Ct., Ottawa, ON, Canada K2E 5N6
E-mail: uib@phoenix-ohc.ca or <mailto:bickis@sympatico.ca>

Respiratory protection users and use managers need to appreciate that respirators are not considered a primary form of exposure control. Ready fixes can be provided to building / room mechanical systems to reduce exposures, resulting in lower risk of infection. Such improvements when implemented, may enable the use of a lower level of respiratory protection, thereby enhancing health care worker performance. The systems introduced in Hong Kong during SARS provides an example of using improved mechanical systems to reduce potential exposures.

Pandemic Prep plans are being developed around the world. Some of these plans are good examples of how to integrate appropriate engineering and respiratory protection programs. Whatever respirator is provided needs to be both appropriate, and used appropriately. Examples of improper use include surgical masks assigned for protection against ethylene oxide and pneumonic plague.