

Appropriate Use of Respiratory Protective Equipment Among Health Care Workers in Singapore, China, and Japan Hospitals During the SARS Outbreak

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Background

Several countries in Asia were affected by the outbreak Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) from late 2002 to 2003. The use of respiratory protective equipment (RPE) by health care workers (HCWs) was one of the major lines of defense against infection.

Aims

To study usage of PPE among 3 groups of HCWs viz. doctors, nurses, and clerical staff in Singapore, China and Japan; to determine if the appropriate RPE were used by the different groups and to examine the factors that may determine inappropriate use

Methods

A self-administered questionnaire survey of HCWs in various health care settings in Singapore (n=15,025), China (n=3,000) and Japan (n=9,978) was conducted during May to July 2003.

Results

27% - 76%, 86% - 90%, and 68% - 70% of the HCWs in Singapore, China and Japan; respectively either agree or strongly agree that paper and / or surgical mask was protective against SARS.

Conclusion

This study also highlights the importance of not only emphasizing the right respirators to be used but also the need to implement a RPE program for all levels of HCWs.