

# PROFESSIONAL ISSUE

Stark County Health Department

# Situation



The nurse practitioner was examining patients, which is not out of the ordinary. What was out of the ordinary was that the first patient the NP had seen that day had fungus growing under the patients breasts she then proceeded to see three more patients another of which also had a fungus under her breasts. In between patients the nurse practitioner washed her hands and gloved for the exams but never disinfected her stethoscope.

# Action

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I discussed this with my preceptor and voiced my concern with the lack of universal precautions used at the facility. My preceptor's response was that she would bring it to the attention of the nurse practitioner when the opportunity arose. My preceptor explained that this was a tricky situation because the NP was very resistant to change, and this had posed problems in the past.

# Outcome

My preceptor after four weeks finally brought it to the attention of the NP. This was done after I reminded my preceptor about the issue. No one was injured, but the possibilities for cross contamination could have posed a negative outcome for many patients. No disciplinary actions were brought against the NP, even though she is constantly not following facility procedures.

# Research

There is much research to support that the stethoscope harbors microorganisms and can be a cause of cross contamination and nosocomial infections. “Although clinicians are instructed about microbiology and the importance of maintaining clean medical instruments, the stethoscope may not be thought of as a potential source of nosocomial infections.” The research stated that most physicians use contaminated stethoscopes that inadvertently contaminate patients and that the use of an alcohol pad to clean their instrument decreased how many contaminants were on the stethoscope.

# Reflection

I felt that this behavior was negligent on the NP's behalf and was appalled by the lack of action by any other staff about this situation. There is a universal precautions protocol set up at the facility, but not followed and without any disciplinary actions. These protocols are in place for a reason and for the benefit of the nurse as well as the patient.

# Questions

1. What would you have done in this situation?
2. How would you deal with someone who is non-compliant to changes?
3. Do you think the nurse practitioner should have been reprimanded?

# References

Wilkins, R. ..., Restrepo, R. D., Bourne, K. C.-C., & Daher, N. D. (2007). Contamination Level of Stethoscopes Used By Physician and Physician Assistants. *The Journal of Physician Assistant Education* , 41, 43.

