Hepatitis C Virus Infectious for Six Weeks on Surfaces?

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HCV Plush from Giant Microbes

A group of researchers from the Yale Schools of Medicine and Public Health demonstrated that hepatitis C virus (HCV) can remain infectious for up to six weeks on surfaces at room temperature. Previously, it was thought that HCV could survive for up to four days on surfaces outside the body, this new research extends that number by a month and a half.

The implications of these findings are far reaching, including safety of patients and workers in healthcare settings, as well as reducing viral hepatitis transmission associated with drug use.

The study, which was funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), and was designed to assess the risk of HCV transmission after infectious material dried on environmental surfaces.

This study reinforces previous findings indicating strict adherence to infection control standards and universal precautions are essential to prevent transmission of HCV in healthcare settings.

HCV has been transmitted via intravenous catheters, blood lancets, and blood glucose monitors (and now, potentially insulin pens). This new study highlights the importance of education when dealing with healthcare staff, as well as others who might come in contact with infected blood. The researchers confirmed that common commercial antiseptics (e.g. bleach, CaviCide, alcohol, etc.) reduce HCV infectiousness when used at the recommended concentrations, but not when diluted.

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