Protecting staff and patients and saving money

Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) is taking steps to make sure staff have healthy hands, and is saving money in the process.

Healthcare workers are highly susceptible to dermatitis - an inflammation of the skin usually caused by an irritating or allergy-causing substance. This is because they are regularly washing their hands and come into contact with a wide range of potential irritants including latex, detergents and disinfectants. You can't "catch" the condition or give it to other people but it can be very painful.

This month LPT will switch from using latex to non-latex gloves for medical examinations and procedures to reduce the potential for allergies amongst staff and patients. In addition, staff will be given better access to moisturising cream for their hands.

Each year the organisation gets through around 1.7 million pairs of gloves and we estimate that switching products will save us £24,000 a year.

The Trust is also introducing a new policy for managing occupational dermatitis that includes having a member of staff in every service responsible for carrying out hand checks on their colleagues. Anyone thought to have dermatitis will be referred to the occupational health service for assessment, advice and treatment.

Health, Safety & Risk Manager Bernadette Keavney said: “The health and safety of our staff and patients is a top priority. It’s not unusual for a nurse to wash their hands 30 or 40 times a day and that can take its toll and make their hands sore. We have very few cases of dermatitis reported to our occupational health team but that may be because staff think it’s an unavoidable occupational hazard. Changing gloves, introducing more checks and raising awareness will help staff to keep their skin healthy, and has the added benefit of saving money.”
Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust provides a range of health and wellbeing services mainly for people living in the city of Leicester and the neighbouring counties of Leicestershire and Rutland. We serve a population of one million, have a budget in excess of £250 million and employ almost 6,000 staff.

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