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# Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococci

## Epidemiology, Infection Prevention, and Control



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### KEYWORDS

- VRE • Infection control • Enterococci • Health-care-associated infections
- Antimicrobial stewardship

### KEY POINTS

- Due to expanding resistance patterns, VRE infections are becoming more difficult to treat.
- Infection control practices are crucial in management of VRE infections and should be based on patient characteristics, hospital needs, and available resources.
- The use of active surveillance screening and contact precautions has not shown to reduce VRE transmission in endemic settings.
- Measures to interrupt indirect contact transmission, including hand hygiene, chlorhexidine bathing, environmental cleaning, and antimicrobial stewardship, are the main components for prevention and control of VRE.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF VANCOMYCIN-RESISTANT ENTEROCOCCI COLONIZATION AND INFECTION

In the United States, enterococci have been ranked as the third most frequently reported pathogen across all types of adult health-care-associated infections in 2015 to 2017.<sup>1</sup> The rising concern for vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE) within hospital systems has placed a larger emphasis on revisiting infection control practices, as VRE infection has been known to be associated with excess mortality, prolonged hospitalization, and increased treatment costs.<sup>2</sup> Obtaining source control, and ensuring prompt susceptibility testing and appropriate choice of antimicrobial therapy are key in management of VRE infections.

VRE is defined as having a minimum inhibitory concentration to vancomycin of greater than or equal to 32 mg/mL based on the Clinical and Laboratory Standard Institute guidelines.<sup>3</sup> Enterococci intrinsically have developed a variety of resistance

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mechanisms. These include penicillin-binding proteins with low affinity to beta-lactams, production of beta-lactamases, and decreased cellular permeability to antibiotics. VRE infections in particular contain plasmid-based genotypes (most common *vanA*), which encode resistance to glycopeptides.<sup>4</sup> Individuals who are at increased risk for developing infections due to VRE are those with multiple medical comorbidities, those who have received multiple courses of antibiotics in the past, and those who are critically ill. Common VRE infections include urinary tract infections associated with urethral catheters, bacteremia, catheter-related infections, endocarditis, wound infections, and intra-abdominal infections.<sup>5</sup> Enterococci are remarkable in their ability to develop rapid antimicrobial resistance. High-dose daptomycin and linezolid are agents for the treatment of VRE infections; however, emerging antibiotic resistance to these agents limits potential available therapies.<sup>6,7</sup>

## EPIDEMIOLOGY

Most enterococci cause infection that originates from the intestinal flora, which can then spread and cause a variety of infections. Colonization with VRE generally precedes infection. There is a 10-fold increased risk of developing a VRE asymptomatic colonization compared with clinically recognized infection. The following individuals are at risk of VRE colonization: health care providers (HCPs), critically ill patients who have received long courses of antibiotics (in particular vancomycin, ceftriaxone, fluoroquinolones, and meropenem), individuals from long-term care facilities, solid-organ transplant patients, and patients with hematological malignancies.<sup>8,9</sup> Colonization can persist for months to years.

Vancomycin-resistant strains of enterococci have been endemic in large hospital settings with epidemics also reported. There is also growing resistance of enterococcus to daptomycin, which is concerning, as this may limit appropriate antibiotic therapy. In 2017, there were an estimated 54,500 patients hospitalized for VRE infections and an estimated 5400 VRE-associated deaths.<sup>10</sup> *Enterococcus faecalis* remains the most common pathogen; however, rising numbers of *Enterococcus faecium* have been noted. Not only is there a local concern for rise of VRE, but in 2017 the World Health Organization identified VRE as an important resistant bacteria in their “Global Priority List of Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria.”<sup>11</sup>

## TRANSMISSION OF VANCOMYCIN-RESISTANT ENTEROCOCCI

VRE colonization, contact with HCPs, and environmental contamination are all associated with transmission of VRE.<sup>12</sup> Little is known about the dynamics of VRE transfer in hospitals.<sup>13</sup> Recent studies have shown there may be a causal relationship between patient VRE colonization and time-dependent environmental contamination within the hospital.<sup>14</sup> VRE colonization, when compared with vancomycin-susceptible strains, has been shown to be a precursor for developing VRE bloodstream infections (BSIs). The risk of VRE BSIs among colonized patients varies dependent on patient risk factors.<sup>15</sup> VRE is known to survive exposure to heat and certain disinfectants and has been found on numerous inanimate objects within hospitals. HCPs in adjunct with the environment are at the center of enterococcal transmission from patient to patient.

The evolution of antimicrobial resistance in enterococcus is complex. Besides patient characteristics, the spread of vancomycin resistance in *Enterococcus* occurs through clonal transmission as well as plasmid and transposon dissemination of resistance determinants. There are common issues that exist with regard to prevention, infection control, and management of both VRE and methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) organisms. An investigation completed from a 900-bed tertiary

care facility in urban Detroit showed a prevalence rate of almost 20% of coinfection or co-colonization of VRE and MRSA.<sup>16</sup> The study concluded that isolation of vancomycin-resistant *E faecalis* (rather than *E faecium*) and the use of linezolid or clindamycin were risk factors for VRE and MRSA coinfection or co-colonization. In vitro transfer of the *vanA* gene from *E faecium* to *S aureus* has been noted, thus making the proximity of VRE and MRSA a risk factor for development of vancomycin-resistant *S aureus*.<sup>17</sup> Vancomycin-resistant *E faecalis* isolates containing Inc18 plasmids and the vancomycin resistance transposon Tn1549 have been identified as precursors for vancomycin resistance in *S aureus*.<sup>16</sup>

## ISSUES AND STRATEGIES IN PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF VANCOMYCIN-RESISTANT ENTEROCOCCI INFECTIONS

After understanding the pathogenesis of VRE development, we know that acknowledging risk factors and understanding transmission are keys to prevention. Patient risk factors include prior antimicrobial use, working in health care, admission to the intensive care unit (ICU) with prolonged hospital stay, and being a resident from a long-term care facility. Colonization pressure within hospitals can also lead to contaminated surfaces and increase exposure to other patients. Community-acquired VRE infections are uncommon; however, risk factors for community-acquired VRE include presence of indwelling device, Foley catheter placement, and recent invasive procedures.<sup>18,19</sup>

There is a wide variation in infection control practices for multidrug-resistant organisms (MDROs) by hospitals within the United States and worldwide. Infection prevention and control strategies include hand hygiene, screening for resistance among isolates, surveillance cultures, contact isolation, environmental cleaning, and antimicrobial stewardship. Although infection control guidelines for MDROs from gram-negative organisms are well established, there continues to be varying ideology for infection control practices for gram-positive organisms including VRE and MRSA. The relative impact of the effectiveness of preventive measures for *E faecalis* and *E faecium* is not well established. **Table 1** provides a summary of strategies used in prevention and control of VRE infections.

### HAND HYGIENE

Hands are a known major vector of patient-to-patient transmission of VRE. There is a large burden on HCPs to prevent transmission of MDROs; however, recent studies show patient hands while in hospital are just as important a reservoir for transmission within the hospital. This study published in 2019 shows that hand contamination with MDROs, including VRE, is common and has a direct correlation with contamination on high-touch room surfaces in a time-dependent manner.<sup>20</sup> The implementation of hand hygiene (both with soap and water and alcoholic chlorhexidine gel) has been shown to cause a 47% decrease in the acquisition of VRE.<sup>21</sup> Compliance with proper hand hygiene remains an opportunity for improvement, including when to wash hands, what to use to wash hands, and the duration of hand washing. A 30-second wash with soap and water has been shown to eliminate all VRE from hands, whereas a 5-second wash with water had no impact.<sup>22</sup>

### COLONIZATION WITH VANCOMYCIN-RESISTANT ENTEROCOCCI

Colonization pressure, which is defined as the proportion of patients colonized with a particular organism during a specified period in a defined geographic area within

<b>Prevention and Control Strategy</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Why</b>
In vitro susceptibility testing	VRE definition are enterococci with MIC to vancomycin $\geq 32$ $\mu\text{g/mL}$	Always	Early detection of vancomycin resistance is needed to determine appropriate antimicrobial therapy
Hand hygiene	Hand washing before and after contact with the patient and the patient's environment Hand washing with alcohol hand sanitizer Hand washing with soap and water when hands are soiled	Always	VRE has high predisposition to be transmitted through the hands of health care workers
Colonization and decolonization	Colonization occurs in patients with previous antimicrobial therapy	No recommendation	Colonization generally precedes infection Certain patients are high risk for infections and complications
Active surveillance	Use of rectal swabs, perirectal swabs, or stool samples	Not routine May consider if the incidence or prevalence of VRE in the facility is high Always in outbreak situations	To monitor prevalence of colonization and infection May consider in areas of skin breakdown and wounds
Chlorhexidine bathing	Daily bathing with chlorhexidine-impregnated washcloth	Always in intensive care unit Not routine in general medical wards	Daily bathing with chlorhexidine-impregnated washcloths has been shown to decrease the risk of acquisition of MDROs
Environmental cleaning	Adherence to cleaning protocols Monitor effectiveness of routine cleaning	Always May consider novel technologies May consider environmental cultures in outbreak settings	VRE may survive in the environment for up to 1 y

*(continued on next page)*

**Table 1**  
(continued)

Prevention and Control Strategy	What	When	Why
Antimicrobial stewardship	Appropriate use of antibiotics to prevent development and spread of resistance	Always	VRE is associated with use of vancomycin, cephalosporin, and antibiotics with anaerobic activity

*Abbreviations:* MDROs, multidrug-resistant organisms; MIC, minimum inhibitory concentration; VRE, vancomycin-resistant enterococci.

*Adapted from* Reyes, K., A.C. Bardossy, and M. Zervos, *Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococci: Epidemiology, Infection Prevention, and Control*. *Infect Dis Clin North Am*, 2016. 30(4): p. 953-965; with permission.

the hospital, is a crucial factor in VRE acquisition.<sup>23</sup> ICUs, a common reservoir for VRE, showed rates of colonization via rectal swab ranging from 9.7% to 51.9%.<sup>24</sup> Colonization pressure of greater than 50% may outweigh other risk factors. A recent study evaluated 244 hospital rooms that were either hosted by VRE-colonized patients or non-VRE-colonized patients. Of the rooms, 89 were hosting a VRE-colonized patient and 62% (55 rooms) became contaminated with VRE compared with 155 rooms hosting non-VRE colonized patients in which only 28% (43 rooms) became contaminated with VRE.<sup>14</sup> VRE colonization has not only a local, but regional effect, and the presence of VRE in one hospital can have up to a 62% increase in prevalence to another hospital by means of patient transfers or staff working at multiple hospitals.<sup>25</sup>

Fecal burden of enterococci in hospitalized patients are a concern, as VRE often dominates the gut microbiome and is at risk to displace commensal anaerobes.<sup>24</sup> Asymptomatic carriage of VRE in the gastrointestinal tract may be one reason for the persistence of VRE in health care settings. Colonization with VRE, along with bacterial burden, can cause more environmental contamination, particularly in patients with diarrhea, and result in spread to other patients. High bacterial burden is more likely to result in spread.<sup>26</sup>

## DECOLONIZATION

Natural clearance of VRE is variable, as colonization has been known to persist from anywhere between 204 and 1371 days.<sup>27</sup> Prolonged asymptomatic colonization of VRE in the gastrointestinal tract can perpetuate endemicity and spread. The modality of VRE decolonization was previously through the use of antibiotics. Newer studies are now evaluating the effectiveness of mechanical decolonization. Ultimately, the method of decolonization to decrease VRE burden is not recommended, as recolonization often occurs within a short time.

Decolonization may, however, be considered in an epidemic or a focused high-risk patient group in which populations are at high risk to develop VRE infections with significant morbidity and mortality. A prospective cohort study conducting active surveillance in a transplant ICU found that liver transplant candidates and recipients colonized with VRE had an increased risk of developing both VRE infection and death compared with noncolonized patients.<sup>28</sup> Among liver transplant patients, active

surveillance showed similar VRE isolates suggesting linked transmission during hospital admissions.<sup>29</sup> Among patients about to receive hematopoietic stem cell transplantation, VRE colonization increased the incidence of VRE BSI; however, it was not associated with increased mortality.<sup>30</sup> This occurred despite infection control measures being implemented effectively.

Decolonization protocols consist of antimicrobials, as well as mechanical modalities which are becoming of more common practice. Antibiotics used for decolonization include oral bacitracin, oral absorbable linezolid, and nonabsorbable daptomycin.<sup>31</sup> One decolonization protocol used the administration of polyethylene glycol bowel preparation to wash-out fecal bacterial microbiome and *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* probiotic to maintain colonization resistance after antimicrobial decolonization.<sup>31</sup> A more recent study used a multisystem, mechanical decolonization protocol without antimicrobials and was shown to have high success rates.<sup>32</sup> This included a combination of environmental cleansing, mechanical evacuation with glycerin enemas, replacement of normal gut flora, and nutrition support and skin hygiene cleansing.<sup>32</sup> VRE decolonization is not generally recommended and should be considered only in certain high-risk populations, or in an outbreak situation.<sup>30,32</sup>

### ACTIVE SURVEILLANCE FOR VANCOMYCIN-RESISTANT ENTEROCOCCI

Active surveillance has been used to identify VRE-colonized patients in epidemic and outbreak situations. This may benefit patients for targeted antimicrobial prophylaxis in situations such as transplant or nursing home patients, and also enhance infection prevention measures to prevent VRE infection and spread.<sup>33</sup> Obtaining stool cultures, and rectal and perirectal swabs are screening methods to detect VRE. The use of real-time polymerase chain reaction (to detect *vanA* and *vanB* genes), VRE screening broth, and automated DNA extraction are some methods used to expedite VRE detection.<sup>34</sup> Identifying positive VRE status can result in earlier antibiotic administration in an infected patient, as a delay of more than 2 days in effective antimicrobial therapy for VRE infection can be associated with a threefold increase in 30-day mortality.<sup>35</sup> The sensitivity of first rectal VRE screening can be less than 50%, an important factor to remember when obtaining surveillance cultures.<sup>36</sup>

High-risk patient groups may need screening for VRE, such as those admitted to the ICU, oncology and transplant wards, patients on chronic dialysis, and patients admitted to acute hospitals from long-term facilities. This is because active surveillance within this population may decrease the risk of developing VRE infection and screening may decrease transmission.<sup>33</sup>

The exact frequency of active screening to identify VRE is not well established. Different screening approaches that have been studied include culturing on admission and periodically, assuming a positive culture pending VRE screen and cohorting colonized patients.<sup>37</sup> There are varying data on clinical care and cost-effectiveness of active screening for VRE within the general public. More recent studies have revealed that discontinuation of active surveillance culturing leads to facility cost saving, with no increased harm, including mortality, was observed.<sup>38</sup>

As VRE surveillance culturing is a sensitive detection method, it is important to note that active surveillance cultures may be of benefit during a rare VRE outbreak. In outbreak situations, microbiologic surveillance and prompt contact precautions (CPs) with strict hand hygiene are vital to control VRE spread. Hospitals with high rates of VRE infections may also benefit from surveillance cultures to identify a genetic or clonal link within the reservoir of VRE-colonized patients to prevent an epidemic.

## CONTACT PRECAUTIONS

There are a variety of modes of transmission with VRE; however, most infections are felt to be related to indirect contact transmission being spread between a patient and HCPs, or contamination between the patient and the surrounding hospital environment. The Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend CPs for “all patients infected with target MDROs and for patients that have been previously identified as being colonized with target MDROs (eg, patients transferred from other units of facilities who are known to be colonized)” who are admitted to acute care hospitals.<sup>39</sup> Previously, the use of CPs for VRE was a common practice, with up to 90% of acute care hospitals complying with recommendations made by the CDC; with heterogeneity in its practices.<sup>40</sup> As more knowledge has been acquired in approaches to infection prevention, newer studies around the globe have found lacking utility in the use of CPs for VRE and MRSA.<sup>41</sup>

The use of CPs includes the practice of isolated patient rooms, dedicated equipment, and use of gloves and gowns. Dedicated time for training staff and the monetary cost of extra gowns and gloves are needed to achieve high compliance. Considerations for maintaining CP in patients with VRE include known colonization, pending negative stool or rectal swabs to guide discontinuation, and high-risk patients (including those who are immunosuppressed, those receiving broad-spectrum antibiotic therapy without VRE activity, those in high-risk hospital units or hospitals with high rates of VRE infection).<sup>42</sup> The duration of CP for VRE varies widely in hospitals: on a case-by-case basis, indefinitely after a positive culture for VRE, or until repeat cultures have cleared.<sup>43</sup> Within each hospital, discontinuation of CPs for patients with VRE colonization or infection should address laboratory testing and surveillance strategies, VRE CP policy implementation and oversight, and which patients should be included.<sup>42</sup>

From a patient perspective, the impact of isolation due to CPs may have psychological effects, which include increased rates of anxiety, fear, depression, and uncertainty.<sup>44</sup> Direct patient care may be negatively affected by CPs due to decreased health care contact and increased adverse events (such as falls, pressure ulcers, medication administration errors, and deep vein thrombosis).<sup>44–46</sup> Discontinuing CP from a hospital perspective is also associated with increased bed availability and revenue recovery, as well as a reduction in personal protective equipment expenditures with an annual savings of approximately \$650,000.<sup>47–49</sup>

CPs have variable effectiveness in different hospital settings. There are some studies that do show a decreased acquisition of VRE that has been associated with CPs.<sup>50–52</sup> Multiple other studies, however, have shown the use of CPs for VRE was not associated with decreased rates of transmission and can have an overall negative impact.<sup>41,46,49,53</sup> A cluster-randomized trial in 20 ICUs across the United States evaluated the use of mandatory gown and gloves for all patient contacts when entering patient rooms to study VRE and MRSA acquisition over a 10-month period.<sup>54</sup> This study concluded there was no statistical significance in the primary outcome of acquisition of VRE and MRSA with the use of CPs.<sup>54</sup>

The use of CPs for VRE has been in place by the CDC since 1970, when compliance was low with hand hygiene, lack of chlorhexidine bathing, and minimal surveillance for health-care-associated infections.<sup>55</sup> Resources at different institutions have now been focusing on horizontal infection control strategies to prevent spread of multiple MDROs rather than a vertical strategy focusing solely on VRE. This includes increased focus on hand hygiene, bare-below-the-elbows, chlorhexidine bathing, environmental



cleaning, and care bundles.<sup>4,41,56</sup> These factors should be considered before implementing CP for VRE.

### CHLORHEXIDINE BATHING

Chlorhexidine gluconate solution is a safe, effective, and low-cost agent for reducing the risk of health-care-associated infections like VRE.<sup>57</sup> The topical antiseptic solution ranges in concentrations from 0.5% to 4.0%, and daily bathing has been shown to reduce body surface bioburden, thus decreasing the risk of acquisition of MDROs.<sup>58</sup>

Earlier studies revealed universal decolonization reduces health-care-related BSI in ICU patients, particularly device-associated infections, reducing the rate by 28%.<sup>59,60</sup> It has since become standardized practice to bathe ICU patients older than 2 months in chlorhexidine to reduce the rates of central-line-associated BSI.<sup>61</sup> A randomized trial showed decolonization with chlorhexidine bathing did not significantly reduce all-cause BSI in non-ICU medical and surgical ward patients, although post hoc analysis noted significant benefit in those with medical devices such as central lines and lumbar drains, decreasing all-cause bacteremia with MRSA or VRE by 32%.<sup>62</sup> Further study is needed on whether the practice reduces outcomes such as mortality or length of hospital stay.<sup>63</sup>

The implications of chlorhexidine bathing on resistance also remains unclear. A study by Alotaibi and colleagues<sup>64</sup> noted that in hospital environments with increased chlorhexidine use, there was less susceptibility of VRE to chlorhexidine compared with vancomycin-sensitive *E faecium*. Another study noted the gene for *vanA*-type vancomycin resistance was upregulated after 15 minutes of exposure to chlorhexidine, although the clinical relevance is unclear.<sup>65</sup>

### ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING

Contact with a contaminated environment can transfer VRE to uncontaminated surfaces. In one study,<sup>20</sup> an estimated 29% of rooms were contaminated with an MDRO within 24 hours of admission, and 10% of patients' hands were colonized with an MDRO at enrollment. Although hands of HCPs are recognized as an important vector for MDRO contamination,<sup>66</sup> equipment (including stethoscopes) can also act as a vector.<sup>67</sup> The estimated proportion for transfer frequency was 33% for HCP hands, 30% for gloves, and 10% for gowns. High-touch surfaces, including bed controls, call buttons, and bedside tray tables are also important locations where MDROs can colonize.<sup>20</sup>

Cleaning of patient care areas is often suboptimal, as one study revealed up to 94% of rooms of patients with VRE colonization or infection had 1 or more positive environmental cultures before cleaning, and 71% were still positive after housekeeping cleaning.<sup>68</sup> Use of bleach on bathroom surfaces, sodium hypochlorite, and alcohol for equipment are typical cleaning protocols.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the use of vaporized hydrogen peroxide in room disinfection showed patients were 80% less likely to acquire VRE.<sup>70</sup> Newer technologies, including ultraviolet light, have been shown to result in significant decrease in VRE contamination of frequently handled surfaces,<sup>71</sup> particularly when added to standard protocol.<sup>72</sup> These nontouch cleaning machines have the advantage of not requiring changes to the room's ventilation, not leaving residue after treatment, and having rapid exposure times.<sup>73</sup> However, these machines come with issues including cost, installation, hospital layout, and training.

Based on the results of microbiological screening studies, environmental colonization has been shown to correlate with patient VRE colonization.<sup>74</sup> New acquisition of VRE and new contamination of rooms with VRE were independently associated

with increased length of stay in a facility and a higher likelihood of requiring hospitalization.<sup>14</sup> Prior environmental contamination increases the risk of VRE acquisition.<sup>75</sup>

## OUTBREAKS OF VANCOMYCIN-RESISTANT ENTEROCOCCI

Outbreaks of VRE are frequently associated with lack of implementation or compliance of infection prevention and control measures.<sup>76</sup> More recently, outbreaks have occurred in solid-organ transplant units,<sup>77</sup> neonatal ICUs,<sup>78,79</sup> and general medical and critical care units.<sup>80,81</sup> Contaminated medical equipment, including rectal thermometers<sup>82</sup> and nonsterile preparation of injectable contrast,<sup>83</sup> have also been implicated as sources for outbreaks.

A multifaceted approach involving infection control specialists, infectious disease physicians, laboratory personnel, and pharmacists is essential in outbreak investigations for VRE.<sup>84</sup> Laboratory testing, including molecular and nucleotide whole genome sequence–based typing, can facilitate the process. Molecular methods should be used only in conjunction with epidemiologic case information. In outbreak settings, a bundle of prevention and control measures are implemented usually simultaneously and are composed of cohorting of patients, active surveillance cultures, environmental culture, extensive environmental cleaning, education, and antimicrobial stewardship.

## ANTIMICROBIAL STEWARDSHIP

Inappropriate antibiotic use is associated with the development of antimicrobial resistance. Prior vancomycin or anti-anaerobic antibiotic exposure is a risk factor for VRE infection, and an independent risk factor for mortality in patients with enterococcal bacteremia. The HICPAC guidelines recommend prudent use of vancomycin, third-generation cephalosporins, and anti-anaerobic antimicrobials including metronidazole to prevent VRE infections.<sup>85</sup> More recent studies<sup>9,86</sup> have revealed exposure to fluoroquinolones and carbapenems is also associated with VRE bacteremia. Equally important is the length of antimicrobial therapy, as the risk for VRE increases with longer durations of antibiotic exposure.<sup>9</sup>

Antimicrobial stewardship is particularly challenging in the era of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, when unnecessary antibiotic use is high,<sup>87</sup> with approximately three-quarters of patients with COVID-19 receiving antibiotics.<sup>88</sup> The long-term consequences of increased prescription antibiotic use in both hospitalized and outpatients with COVID-19 is yet to be determined.

The One Health approach focuses on simultaneous protection of humans, animals, and the environment from climate change.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, one key feature that could reduce the burden of disease from antimicrobial resistance is by adopting its public health strategies,<sup>90</sup> including those aimed at reducing antimicrobial use in animals and animal feed.<sup>91</sup>

It is critical for facilities around the globe to implement infectious disease physician-led antimicrobial stewardship programs.<sup>92,93</sup> This multidisciplinary approach optimizes antibiotic choices and discourages antibiotic use when clinically unnecessary.<sup>94</sup> Antimicrobial exposure is an important risk factor for VRE, and stewardship is crucial for infection control.<sup>95</sup> The emergence of resistance of enterococci to newer antimicrobials, including daptomycin, supports the use of antimicrobial stewardship to reduce VRE colonization and infection.<sup>96</sup>

## CLINICS CARE POINTS

- VRE is defined as having a minimum inhibitory concentration to vancomycin of greater than or equal to 32 mg/mL based on the Clinical and Laboratory Standard Institute guidelines.
- Risk factors for transmission of VRE include known colonization, contact with HCPs, and environmental contamination.
- Hand hygiene is a key element in decreasing the risk of VRE acquisition.
- Active surveillance and decolonization of VRE carriers is not recommended due to high risk of relapse; however, can be considered in high-risk populations and outbreak situations.
- The use of contact precautions has not been shown to have decreased rates of VRE transmission.
- Chlorhexidine bathing reduces health-care-associated BSIs in ICU patients.
- Environmental cleaning with bleach, sodium hypochlorite, alcohol, vaporized hydrogen peroxide, and ultraviolet light can reduce VRE contamination of surfaces.
- Prudent use and duration of vancomycin, third-generation cephalosporins, and anaerobic antimicrobials can prevent VRE infections.

## DISCLOSURE

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