

Media release

3 April 2003

IV catheters cause most blood infections

In the April edition of *Australian Prescriber* Robert Horvath and Peter Collignon from the Infectious Diseases and Microbiology Unit at the Canberra Hospital consider, why intravenous catheters are the commonest cause of blood infections in Australia.

In Australia there are at least 3,500 cases of intravenous catheter infections per year, 12% of which are fatal.

IV catheters are used to allow administration of medicines and are indispensable in modern medicine. IV catheters are no longer restricted to patients in hospital and there are a growing number of chemotherapy and IV nutrition patients on 'home' therapy.

The authors' say that a large number of intravenous catheters in hospitalised patients are not in active use for prolonged periods of time but remain *in situ* 'just in case'. Also some catheters are being used for interventions that are not necessary.

Recommendations from the paper include:

- using an intravenous catheter only when essential and other options are not appropriate
- adequate skin preparation and aseptic technique when inserting catheters, and
- removal of the catheter when it is no longer clinically necessary.

In the same issue of *Australian Prescriber* Dr Mary Moran of Mèdecins Sans Frontières questions why global drug prices are so high and Associate Professor Louise Baur looks at childhood obesity.

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CP.04.03