

INCREASE HEALTHCARE WORKER AND PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

TRSA represents the linen, uniform and facility services industry. TRSA members are commercial laundry/ facility services companies and their supplier partners who manufacture and supply their needed supplies and infrastructure. Both of these sectors of our membership enable life-sustaining businesses to safely operate. These include healthcare facilities, grocery stores, infrastructure maintenance, food processing, public utilities (water and energy), first-responders, federal and state governments, laboratories, pharmaceutical manufacturing, and other fundamental supply chain businesses.

BACKGROUND

The prolonged outbreak of SARS COV-2 has created an appetite within hospitality and healthcare sectors for information on stability and survival of coronaviruses not only on various surfaces, but also its ability to survive in wash processes. TRSA, along with its international partners, conducted a study by De Montfort University to examine how Coronavirus behaves on three fabrics commonly used in the healthcare industry.

The study found viruses similar to the strain that causes Covid-19 can survive on clothing and transmit to other surfaces for up to 72 hours depending on the material make-up of the product.

The results showed that 100% polyester poses the highest risk for transmission of the virus, with the infectious virus still present after three days that could transfer to other surfaces. On 100% cotton, the virus lasted for 24 hours, while on a polycotton blend, the virus only survived for six hours. In short a virus can pose a public risk on HCT's while being worn in public (i.e. restaurant, public transportation, grocery store).

The study also showed virtually all industrial wash processes will effectively eliminate any infection risk caused by coronavirus and other pathogens. The exception is home laundering of Healthcare Contact Textiles (scrubs). The home laundering process does not reach the needed temperature to effectively eliminate the infection risk.

The conclusion from this research is that the fabrics potentially contaminated with the virus should be managed within a controlled environment where the segregation of soiled linen is well managed. This should eliminate the potential for recontamination of both clean linen, surfaces and equipment. The risk is highest with 100% polyester fabric which is likely to include some nurses' uniforms, gowns, drapes, furnishings, curtains etc. It is essential that the processing sites are well-equipped to manage the risks of cross contamination and have adequate procedures and practices in place. Healthcare uniforms should be washed in line with recognized healthcare laundering procedures such as those recognized by the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC).

ACTION

Require healthcare facilities to provide industrial laundered, hygienically clean Healthcare Contact Textiles (HCT's) for staff to change into and out of for each respective shift and workers to change into and out of the HCT's for each respective shift.