

Complications of Foley catheters-is infection the greatest risk?

Article summary:

Foley catheter related genitourinary trauma requiring intervention is as common as symptomatic urinary tract infection (UTI).

A 16-month surveillance of Foley catheter related bacteriuria and trauma was performed at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center resulting in 6,513 surveyed Foley catheter days. Of these, 116 possible UTI episodes (1.8% of Foley catheter days) and 100 instances of catheter associated genitourinary trauma (1.5% of Foley catheter days) were identified. Of the 116 UTI episodes, only 21 (18%) involved clinical manifestations. The remaining 95 asymptomatic bacteriuria episodes accounted for 39 (70%) of 56 antimicrobial treated possible UTI episodes. Of the 100 instances of catheter associated genitourinary trauma, 32 (32%) led to interventions such as prolonged catheterization, cystoscopy or suprapubic catheter placement. Trauma leading to intervention accounted for as high a proportion of Foley catheter days (0.5%) as did symptomatic UTI (0.3%). The current focus on infection as the main Foley catheter associated harm may be counterproductive by causing healthcare providers to overlook other important risks such as trauma.

Leuck AM, Wright D, Ellingson L, et al. Complications of Foley catheters-is infection the greatest risk? J Urol 2012;187:1662-6.
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022534711060629>