PURPOSE
This document will provide recommendations for the use of portable, oscillating blade fans in patient care areas in Covenant Healthcare Facilities (including both Acute Care and Continuing Care).

BACKGROUND
Portable, oscillating blade fans (hereby known as fans for the purpose of this document) are used for climate control by circulating airflow to create a breeze. Fans can assist in patient and staff comfort when ambient air temperatures in healthcare facilities increase. However, oscillating fans with blades can pose a contamination risk through the dispersal of dust, debris and airborne transmitted microorganisms and can also change the pattern of airflow. Therefore it is important to understand and balance the risk of infection with patient and staff comfort and safety.

PRINCIPLES/GUIDELINES
IPC recommendations for use of fans in patient care areas:

- Fans should have blades that are accessible for cleaning. Bladeless fans are not recommended.
- Healthcare staff should perform an infection control risk assessment before using fans in patient rooms on a case-by-case basis.
- Fans should be used only as a temporary measure (e.g. summer months) and not on a year round basis (unless there is an exceptional circumstance and is approved by the IPC department).
- Fans should only be used at the lowest speed for less disruption of dust and debris.
- Fans should be turned off in the room for the following, including, but not limited to:
  - When a sterile field is required.
  - When a sterile/aseptic medical procedure is being performed (such as a wound dressing change).
  - When a procedure is performed that might generate a splashing of body fluids such as a lumbar puncture, thoracentesis or any other type of fluid aspiration.
Hereafter, all references to ‘patients’ includes residents and clients.

- Fans are considered non-critical devices and must be regularly cleaned:
  - Minimally IPC suggests weekly cleaning according to manufacturer’s cleaning instructions.
  - IPC suggests developing a written schedule that documents when the device is cleaned and by whom.
- Consult IPC for use of fans for patients on additional isolation precautions other than airborne isolation precautions (where fans are prohibited).
- Consult IPC for use of fans in food preparation and food service areas.

Prohibit Fan Use in:
- Rooms/areas with directed airflow.
- Rooms with patients on airborne precautions or where there is a risk of airborne transmission such as when an aerosol generating medical procedure might be performed.
- Medical Device Reprocessing departments, any area outside MDRD that performs reprocessing and areas where sterile supplies are stored.

Additional Considerations:
- Contact IPC for IPC patient related questions.
- Contact OHS for employee related questions.
- Contact site Facilities Management for HVAC, electrical and infrastructure questions.

REFERENCES


