

## **VENTILATION LINKED TO MRSA INFECTIONS IN HEALTHCARE FACILITIES**

Healthcare facilities are failing to contain airborne infections transmitted via poorly maintained ventilation and air conditioning systems, according to a leading indoor air quality specialist. Dr Ghasson Shabha, senior lecturer at Birmingham School of the Built Environment, told a webinar hosted by CIBSE *that the threat posed by dirty ductwork is often overlooked by healthcare professionals, who fail to put planned maintenance strategies in place because the source of the infections is 'out of sight, out of mind'.*

He also criticised the fact that only around 5% of air conditioning systems have been inspected, despite this now being a mandatory requirement under European regulations. Bacterial spores in ductwork can often be behind outbreaks of MRSA and other serious infections in hospitals and clinics, he told his audience, which included members of the Building & Engineering Services Association (B&ES) and the Institute of Healthcare Engineering and Estate Management (IHEEM).

*“People seeking timely information about the patterns of cross-infection are in urgent need of better data.”* He said the ventilation hygiene industry was eager to address this potentially fatal problem, but facilities managers (FMs) did not have a system of information exchange that would highlight the risks, or the extent of the problem across the whole healthcare sector.

He added that 3D building information modelling software could also help ventilation specialists, identify ‘infection hotspots’, and continued: *The data can then be fed into a predictive infection criticality model (PICM) to assess the intensity, and frequency of colonisation and hotspots. This allows FMs to manage the risks more proactively.*

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