

ANTIMICROBIAL CURTAINS: A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY



OR Sustainability Expert

FIRST CASE



KAREN GOELST
CEO & FOUNDER OF KLEENEDGE

First Case OR Sustainability Expert™:

Antimicrobial Curtains: A False Sense of Security

Karen Goelst | CEO & Founder of KleenEdge

In 2014 a 650-bed academic, teaching hospital decided to switch all curtains to antimicrobial fabric. Because of this change, the Environmental Services leaders decided that it was no longer necessary to clean or exchange curtains between patient uses unless they were visibly soiled. They aimed to determine the degree of bacterial contamination of antimicrobial curtains.

Of 20 curtains, 95% showed bacterial growth. Of the 10 door curtains, 50% showed gram-negative bacteria (GNB) growth which is among the most significant public health problems in the world due to the high resistance to antibiotics. These microorganisms have great clinical importance in hospitals because they put patients in the intensive care unit (ICU) at high risk and lead to high morbidity and mortality.

And 100% of the curtains had Gram-positive organisms. Gram-positive bacteria are increasingly becoming resistant to antibiotics. For example, methicillin-resistant Staph aureus (MRSA) are resistant to most antibiotics.

Of the 10 commode curtains, 10% showed Gram-negative organisms and 90% had Gram-positive organisms.

Current studies show that even pre-treated textiles can become contaminated with pathogenic microorganisms. It is unfortunate that this “fecal patina” is not visible to the naked eye because this limitation allows for curtains to be bypassed for months by EVS management.

Every patient deserves and expects a safe, clean, and disinfected room in which to recover. The use of antimicrobial curtains provided a false sense of security for the EVS leaders and failed to live up to the expectation the hospital had when the curtains were purchased.

Have more questions for this expert? Contact Karen at kgoelst@KleenEdge.com

OR Sustainability Expert Series™ Biography:

Karen Goelst

Founder & CEO



With a 20-year background in architectural specialties and textiles, Karen Goelst became passionate about solving the issues surrounding privacy curtains following her 15-year-old son's hospital stay with MRSA.

Staying at his bedside she noticed everybody touched the fabric privacy curtain, but the label showed that it hadn't been exchanged for 14 months. Thankfully her son recovered, but this realization started her journey in trying to understand why curtains weren't getting exchanged, when other touchpoints in the room were thoroughly disinfected. Karen founded KleenEdge to ensure this infection risk did not impact other families.

KleenEdge builds its privacy curtain solutions on 4 pillars:

- Protocol software that monitors curtain exchange compliance
- Sustainable cost-saving recyclable curtains
- No-ladder solutions to promote lean workflows and safety
- Patient and staff safety

Launched in 2018, the company received early accolades for its innovative Protocol Compliance Software, receiving AHE's Product Innovation Award, as well as getting patents for the QuickLoad and TeleTrack "no ladder" curtain exchange cubicle track solutions. KleenEdge's solutions have helped many healthcare facilities dramatically reduce operational costs, while having peace of mind knowing that their curtain exchanges are compliant and deliver the highest standard of care for their patient's safety.



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