



A Potential Disaster . . . Not What You Think

By Susan Saldibar

There is a potential disaster hiding in senior living communities and it's not about falls or lawsuits. It's bacteria. And, it's probably lurking right now in your "spotless" community.

First, a few facts to mull over.

1. According to the CDC, 1 to 3 million Infections are acquired in senior living communities.
2. Of those infections, Clostridium Difficile or "C. Diff" and Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus or "MRSA" are rising at an alarming rate.
3. These infections are highly contagious, especially among a senior population, and can lead to hospitalization.

And, communities also have to deal with all the common viruses such as cold, flu, norovirus etc. brought in from the outside every day.

When "clean" isn't clean.

No one knows more about "clean" than [Sodexo](#) (a senior housing forum partner). I recently read about their impressive multi-year study, the purpose of which was to better understand and ultimately reduce acquired infections. I thought the results were pretty eye opening:

- Less than 50% of surfaces are ‘actually’ clean when viewed under a black light.
- If an area looks ‘visibly’ clean, cleaning people are less likely to clean in that area.
- Bleach and standard disinfectants are no longer as effective on the toughest germs.
- To properly disinfect, many legacy cleaning products needed to stay wet for up to 10 minutes, which is nearly impossible in a resident room.
- Reusable microfiber materials lose their efficacy after laundering. Consequently, it drives up the cost of laundering.

The study also debunked a myth that using more of a product or at a higher concentration will make a surface “cleaner”. In reality, increased chemicals do not result in measurable gains. What they can do, however, is cause further damage to furniture, flooring or equipment, which can lead to higher concentrations of microbes.

There is no question that senior living operators spend a lot of time and effort to create an environment that exudes health and wellness. But, according to Sodexo, they are missing a big piece of the puzzle: using cleaning to keep current residents in communities longer and keep staff healthier.

A 50-70% reduction in acquired infections means less staff sick days, longer resident stays.

Sodexo has used their research to develop a new program, including the use of new and innovative cleaning products. They combine the technology with specialized staff training on how to reduce the spread of infections and keep residents and staff safer.

And, in a move that would impress even the biggest germ-o-phobe, they use black light and fluorescent marking spray to check surfaces after cleaning to make sure they are completely clean.

The results are impressive: a 50-70% reduction in acquired infections!

In an industry that needs to hang on to its residents longer and keep all staffing hands on deck, that is a huge win for the bottom line.

Changing the conversation.

Ultimately, though, it’s about keep residents and staff safe and healthy.

“I can’t wait to change the conversation in the industry on how cleanliness is defined. It is an overlooked, but critical part of running a community and integral to the quality of life and safety of staff, residents and their families” said Joe Cuticelli, CEO of Sodexo Seniors North America.



This article has been brought to you by [Sodexo](#) in partnership with [Senior Housing Forum](#).