Hand hygiene is a complex, automatic behavior. Psychological theories of behavior change could be used to develop effective hand hygiene compliance interventions.1

Understanding implicit and explicit attitudes towards hand hygiene is important when designing effective interventions to improve hand hygiene rates. This study examined explicit attitudes towards hand hygiene and compared these to implicit attitudes.

Methods: HCWs (N=420) from 70 long-term care facilities in Ontario, Canada completed: (1) a survey tool based on psychological theories of behavior change to examine explicit attitudes towards hand hygiene, and (2) a computer administered implicit association test (IAT) and affect misattribution procedure (AMP) to evaluate implicit attitudes towards hand hygiene. Sociodemographics and self-reported hand hygiene adherence were measured. Factor analysis was performed to identify themes. Correlations were conducted between explicit and implicit attitudes.

Results: Factor analysis identified key explicit attitudes themes: (1) beliefs about consequences to self and others, (2) environmental resources, (3) time pressure and workload, and (4) social/professional role and identity. AMP and IAT results indicated that these procedures can be effective in reducing healthcare associated infections, yet past research has failed to report hand hygiene adherence. While past research has reported hand hygiene adherence were measured. Factor analysis was performed for the survey tool to determine common themes, which were then mapped to the Theoretical Domains Framework (a multi-domain behaviour change framework).2

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Factor analysis identified key explicit attitudes: (1) beliefs about consequences to self and others, (2) environmental resources, (3) time pressure and workload, and (4) social/professional role and identity. AMP/IAT (implicit tests) were neither correlated with explicit attitudes nor with self-reported hand hygiene adherence.