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## ARTICLES

# Organic buildup and residual blood on infant stethoscopes in maternal-infant areas

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**OBJECTIVE:** To identify the presence of residual blood and organic matter on "clean" stethoscopes in maternal-infant units. **DESIGN:** In this retrospective, nonexperimental study, stethoscopes were tested using qualitative measurements.

**SETTING:** Using a nonprobability sampling technique, 11 acute care hospitals in a three-state area of the southwestern United States were studied.

**PARTICIPANTS:** All stethoscopes found on the maternal-infant units were included, for a total sample size of 97. **INSTRUMENTS:** A hand-held 10-power lens was used to visually rank the amount of organic buildup, and the phenolphthalein test was used to detect residual blood on the stethoscope.

**RESULTS:** Of 97 clean infant stethoscopes, 80% of labor and delivery and 72% of nursery stethoscopes had organic buildup on the diaphragm. Both areas had similar rates of organic buildup,  $\chi^2(1, N = 97) = 1.00, p = ns$ . Nursery areas did have significantly lower rates of residual blood than stethoscopes from labor and delivery,  $\phi^2(1, N = 97) = 9.89, p = .002$ . Seventy-six percent of labor and delivery stethoscopes were positive for blood, as compared to 46% of nursery stethoscopes. **CONCLUSIONS:** Traditional methods for cleaning stethoscopes used in labor and delivery and nursery areas are ineffective in removing blood and other body fluids from the stethoscope.