Section 3

Isolate the Patient

This section describes how to:

- Gather supplies to set up an isolation area.
- Make a substitute item from available materials whenever a recommended item is not available.
- Select a site for the VHF isolation area and set up:
  - The patient's room
  - A changing room for health care workers to use when changing clothes
  - A changing room for other health facility staff to use near their work area
  - A family entrance, if necessary
  - A security barrier around the entire isolation area.
- Counsel family members about patient care.

Section 3 Isolate The Patient

Isolating the VHF patient will:

- Restrict patient access to health facility staff trained to use VHF Isolation Precautions.
- Establish a barrier between the VHF patient and uninfected patients, other health facility staff, and visitors.

3.1 Select Site for the Isolation Area

Ideally, an isolation area should already be available to admit patients requiring isolation.

If an isolation area is not available or if advance preparations have not been done, and VHF is suspected, immediately identify and set aside:

- A single room with an adjoining toilet or latrine.

If a single room is not available, select one of the following in order of preference:

- A separate building or ward that can be used with VHF patients only (especially if Ebola haemorrhagic fever is suspected, or if there is a large number of patients)
- An area in a larger ward that is separate and far away from other patients in the ward
- An uncrowded corner of a large room or hall
- Any area that can be separated from the rest of the health facility (TB rooms, isolation ward for infectious diseases, private or semiprivate rooms).

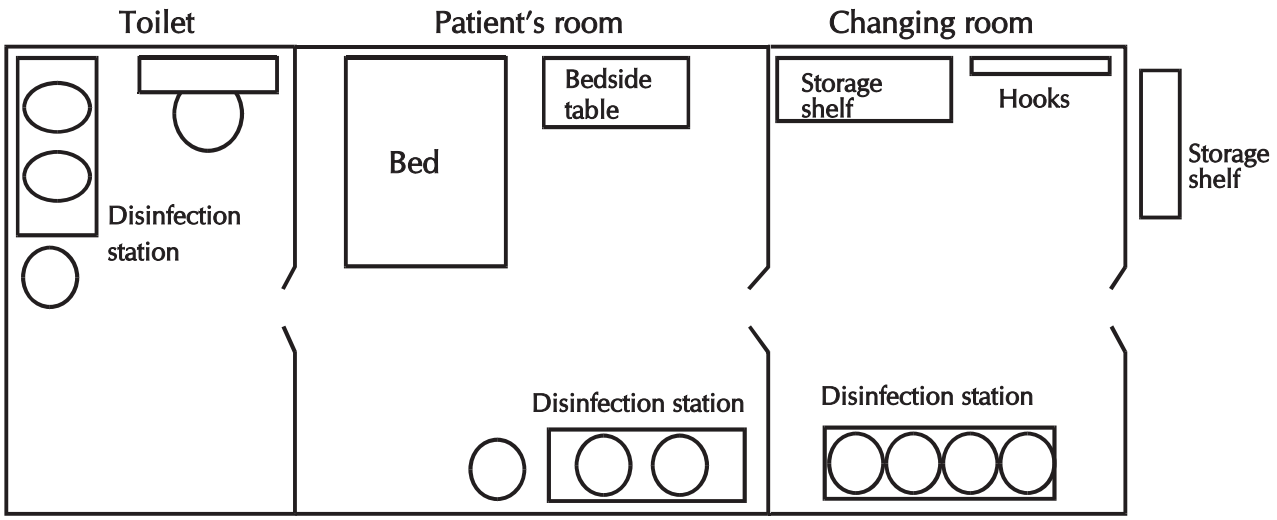

Fig. 9. A sample layout for a single patient

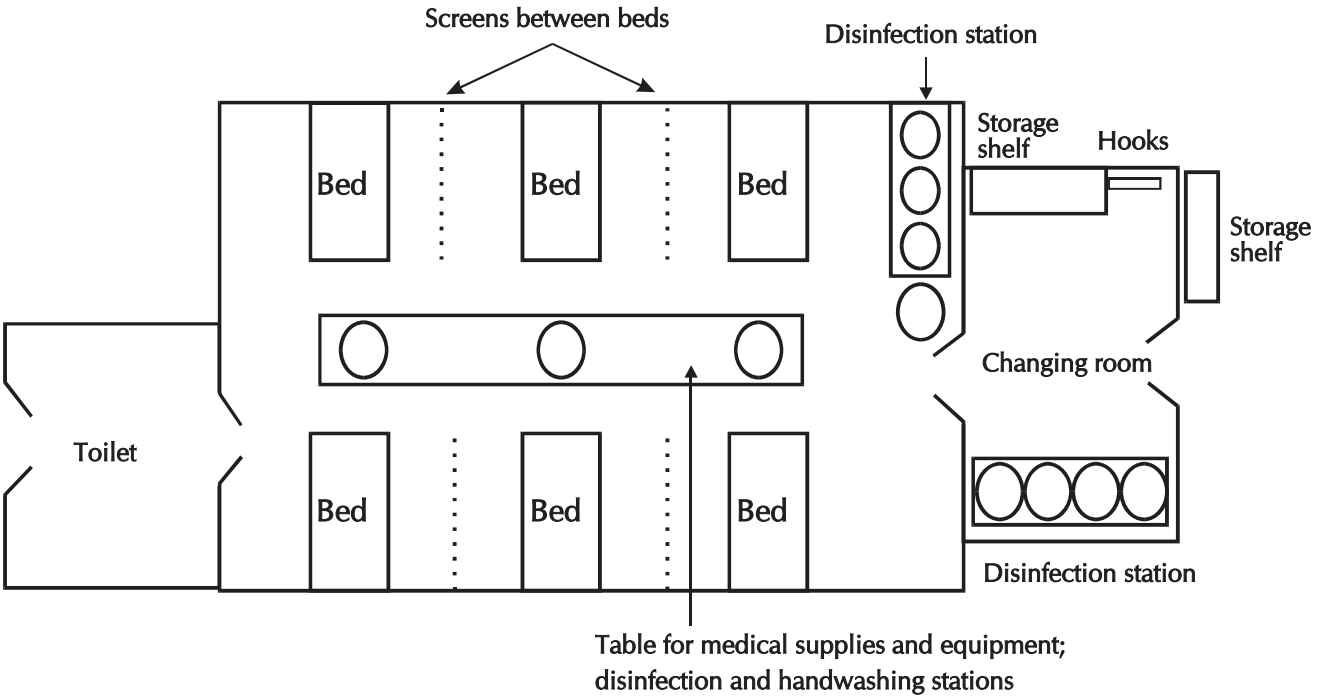

Fig. 10. A sample layout for several patients

3.3.2 Gather Supplies for the Patient Area

Obtain the following items for use in the patient's room:

Bed and mattress or sleeping mat for each patient.

Plastic sheeting to cover the mattress or sleeping mat. This is strongly recommended. Plastic sheeting will protect the mattress from contamination. It can be easily cleaned and disinfected if it becomes contaminated with infectious body fluids.

Bedding for each bed – at least 1 blanket and a bottom sheet. If necessary, the patient or the patient's family can bring the bedding from home.

One thermometer, one stethoscope, and one blood-pressure cuff per patient. Keep them in the isolation area for reuse with the same patient.

If there is not enough equipment to supply one each of these items per patient, assign one piece of equipment for use only with the patients in the isolation area.

Covered container for alcohol or bleach solution used to disinfect thermometer and stethoscope after use with each patient.

Puncture-resistant container for collecting used disposable needles, syringes and other sharp instruments.

Puncture-resistant tray with soapy water for collecting reusable needles, syringes and instruments.

Bedside table or shelf on which to place medical instruments, puncture-resistant container, and so on.

Large wall clock with a second hand for measuring respiration rates and pulse.

Bedpan for each patient.

Screens or other barriers to place around the VHF patients' beds. This will prevent patient-to-patient transmission through spills or splashes of infectious body fluids or from aerosol routes.

If screens are not available, stretch ropes or lines from one end of the patient area to the other. Hang sheets from the ropes.

Disinfection station with buckets, sprayer, bleach solutions, soap and water, mop, and a supply of one-use towels. It is preferable to dispose of gloves after each use. However, the reuse of gloves in many health facilities is a common practice. Disinfect gloved hands between patients if there are not enough gloves for health care workers to dispose of after each patient.

Container with soapy water for collecting discarded outer gloves.

3.4 Set Up Changing Rooms

For patient-care staff:

One changing room is needed outside the patient isolation area. This area is where health care workers will put on protective clothing to protect them from spills or splashes of infectious body fluids while they are in the patient's room. After leaving the patient's room, they will reenter the changing room and remove the protective clothing. They will hang it for reuse or dispose of it appropriately.

Contaminated clothing and supplies remain in the changing room until cleaning staff trained to use VHF Isolation Precautions take the VHF-contaminated items to the laundry or disposal site.

For laboratory, cleaning, laundry, and waste disposal staff:

Set up changing rooms near the work areas for other health facility staff who will handle laboratory specimens and who will clean launder, or dispose of contaminated items. They will also need to wear protective clothing during any contact they have with body fluids or VHF-contaminated items.

The stations in the changing room should be set up so that traffic flow is from the *least* to *most contaminated* area.

3.5 Place Security Barrier Around Isolation Area

Restrict access to the isolation area: Place signs around the isolation area clearly stating that access is restricted. Or tie lines or ropes around the isolation area and hang plastic sheets from them.

Fig. 11. A security barrier and sign

3.6 Consult Family Members about Patient Care

Talk with family members and explain why the patient is being isolated. Tell them about the risk of transmission for VHF and why protective clothing is needed. Answer any questions they have.

When there is a large outbreak (more than one or two cases), identify a person to serve as a liaison between health facility staff and the patients' families. Select a health staff member, an experienced community member, or a convalescent patient.

If it is the custom for family members to provide cleaning and washing of the patient while the patient is in the health facility, help the family to select a caregiver. Select as caregiver the family member who has already had the most contact with the patient. Also select a second person who can do the patient care activities when the other caregiver is resting.

In areas where family members participate in patient care, they are likely to help the patient with:

- Feeding and giving water
- Washing the hospital gown or pyjama with soap and water
- Getting up or moving around.

When a VHF is suspected, it is likely that health care workers trained in VHF Isolation Precautions will do most of the direct patient care tasks. However, if there are family members who will assist with direct patient care, give them information and training about:

- The risk of VHF transmission and the reason for protective clothing
- How to wear gloves, gowns, and a mask
- How to take off gloves, gowns, and mask and store or dispose of them safely.

Make sure there is a changing room for family members to use that is separate from the changing room for health care workers. Provide a set of protective clothing for the family members to wear in the isolation room. At a minimum, make sure that the family members wear at least a pair of gloves.

Checklist: Supplies for a Changing Room

Storage Outside the Changing Room:

1. Shelf or cabinet with lock _____
2. Supply of clean scrub suits, gowns, aprons, gloves, masks, headcovering, and eyewear _____
3. Covered shelf for storing disinfected boots _____
4. Bucket for collecting non-infectious waste _____

Inside the Changing Room:

1. Hooks, nails, or hangers for hanging reusable gowns, scrub suits _____
2. Roll of plastic tape _____
3. Handwashing supplies: bucket or pan, clean water, soap, one-use towels _____
4. Bucket or pan, 1:100 bleach solution for disinfecting gloved hands _____
5. Container with soapy water for collecting discarded gloves _____
6. Container with soapy water for collecting used instruments to be sterilized* _____
7. Container with soapy water for collecting reusable gowns, masks, sheets to launder* _____

*Place outside the changing room if the changing room is too small

If large amounts of waste on floor:

Sprayer, bucket or shallow pan with 1:100 bleach solution for disinfecting boots _____