Photo surveillance

Providing a comfortable, reassuring and safe environment for paediatric healthcare is particularly important. Toys can pacify or distract young children, helping them to cope with unfamiliar surroundings and procedures (McKay and Gillespie, 2000). Parents might be encouraged to bring a favourite toy for their child, avoiding toys for shared use that present hygiene and infection control problems. The risk may be modest but toys quickly become soiled, with soft toys in particular rapidly acquiring a generous flora of potential pathogens (Avila-Aguero et al. 2004; Merriman et al. 2002).

Teddy was found in the waiting area of the ECG Department of a London teaching hospital, shackled by the neck and secured by chains to the wall. Sitting alone on the floor, his dirty and in part slightly matted fur gave testament to perhaps years of service in the welfare of children, though his shackles suggested poor attention to personal hygiene and infrequent, if any, visits to the local laundry. Regular laundering of toys can significantly reduce their microbial burden (Avila-Aguero et al. 2004) but, as in this case, toys too often escape regular hygiene interventions (Little and Cutcliffe, 2006). Teddy was surely a hostage to hygiene.

Conflict of interests
None declared.

References