

Reviewer's Code: 00503404

Thank-you for your comments:

1. A possible limitation of the study is that generalizability of the study to other disinfection protocols and molecules is limited and questionable.

Our aim was to determine the relevant contamination present during the endoscope "hang time" and if this merited a re-processing of the endoscope prior to use. We wanted to evaluate if one follows the manufacturer's disinfection protocol what bacterial contamination ensued during the hang time period. We did not want to generalize to other disinfection protocols for the endoscopes.

2. Authors could comment that actually higher number of scopes were positive after a short hanging duration. Accepting small numbers, please comment if this is still important for the clinical practice?

The odd positive endoscope result, after a short hanging duration is interesting and possible explanation could be due to operator contamination during collection or plating to bacteriological media. We need to see if such a trend is observed as the evaluation is ongoing. Going forward we will also try to identify the microbe, currently not all microbes are in our laboratory detection system's data base. In addition, we feel that it is not practical to speculate on the clinical relevance of small numbers as it is important to know what type of microbes were/are present and address their pathogenic potential, which again was beyond the scope of this investigation but is paramount for quality assurance of any endoscopy program.

3. Please comment more the 200cfu /mL cut-off, seeing the results is this still the recommendation for endoscopes as well, acceptable, or should be lower?

The 200 CFU/mL was chosen as this is the maximum CFU for potable water. Ultimately we want to see if a lower number of organisms can be achieved and maintained, and see if a new set value can be established.

Reviewer's Code: 00504581

Thank-you for your comments:

1. There should be expressed the percentage of gastroscopies , colonoscopes o duodenoscopes contaminated at the end of the cleaning process with more than 10 cfu and at the different time intervals.

Figure 1 demonstrates the number of negative cultures from gastroscopies, colonoscopies and duodenoscopies at the different periods of hang time (1-7 days) and therefore the percentage of positive cultures could be inferred from this. However, to clarify we have added a third figure that demonstrates the percentage of positive cultures on each day of hang time. No samples for culture were sent immediately after reprocessing, samples were only obtained after a period of hang time.

2. Were the patients scoped with contaminated endoscopes followed in order to check infectious complications, especially on the ERCP setting.

Patient who were scoped with “contaminated endoscopes” were not followed up, as all culture results were below the acceptable limit of CFU. This would however be an important aspect to study in the future.

3. The figure 2 should be better explained , what does “Number of positive samples at each level” mean? outside of specially designed cabinet.

This figure refers to the total number of cultures that were positive at each specified CFU (x10). For example, there were 6 colonoscopy samples that grew 10 CFU/mL.

4. The authors agree on some limitations of their study concerning to the unawareness of bacteria's type growing on the plates of culture, Enterobacteriaceae?, but I am afraid the reality of the cleaning process in the different endoscopic units all over the world are quite different . I am specifically referring to the different types of storage of the endoscopes, especially endoscopes hanging on the wall of appropriate rooms (not in cabinet) . Could you comment something about that.

The aim of our study was to determine bacterial contamination after endoscope “hang time” and based on these results whether re-processing of endoscopes was required. Further, we wanted to assess, if individuals followed manufacturer disinfection protocol, the amount of bacterial contamination that would accrue during the hang time. Our goal was not to generalize to other disinfection or storage protocols.

Reviewers code: 01799104

Thank-you for your comments:

1. First, I don't think that named colonoscopy CHD4 is necessary because it will confuse the readers. You may mention one colonoscopy instead of CHD4.

This change has been addressed in the article, all mention of specific endoscope identifiers has been removed.

2. Secondly, there may be incorrect title for x-axis of figure 2. It should be "Colony Forming Units (x 10)".

This has been corrected in the figure axis.

Reviewer's Code: 03474684

1. Study with similar results have been published by your group in Endoscopy journal 2007. Would you kindly elaborate the similarities and differences; if any, between both these studies.

Our initial study assessed only ERCP and colonoscopies and therefore the bacterial contamination of gastroscopes was not assessed in that study, however both studies assess after a hang time of up to 7 days. Furthermore, only a very small number of samples were obtained from each type of endoscope. Our previous study also only assessed whether cultures were positive or negative and did not seek to assess if there was any correlation between hang time and bacterial load. Therefore, we feel that the findings and conclusions of this study expand on those of our previous study and are important and novel findings in the literature.