

GAR-O™, a RAG-rated decontamination protocol aligned with transmission-based precautions to standardise hospital infection prevention and control

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Background

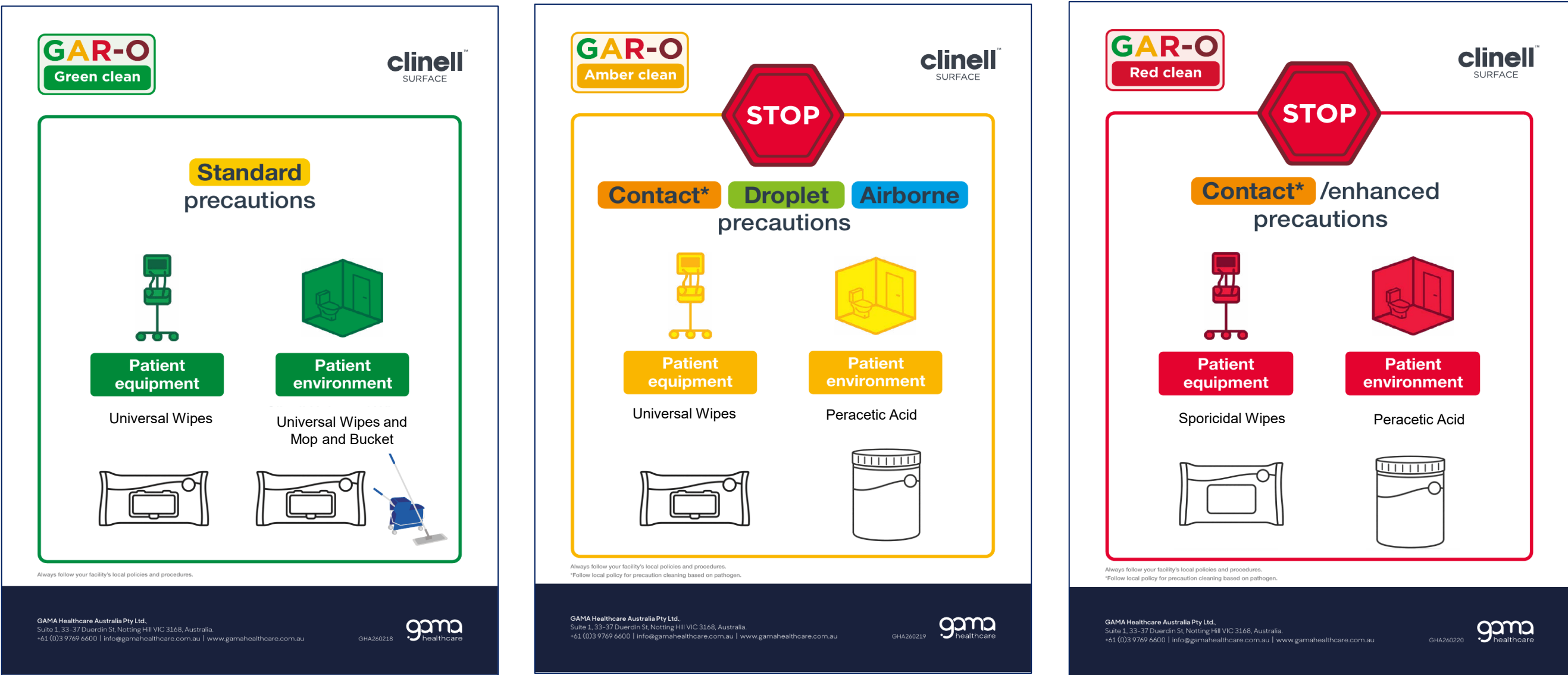
Effective decontamination and adherence to transmission-based precautions (TBPs) are both critical for preventing healthcare-associated infections (HAIs).^{1,2,3} Inconsistent communication and practices across healthcare systems may hinder infection prevention and control objectives having a direct impact on patient safety. Standardisation using a RAG (Red-Amber-Green) framework aligned with TBPs offers a practical solution to minimise human factors and improve compliance.^{2,3}

Aim

To develop and evaluate the potential implementation of a RAG-rated decontamination protocol guided by scientific evidence and international IPC guidelines^{1,2,3,5,6} to improve compliance, standardise processes and address risks related to emerging pathogens across multiple countries.

Methods

A streamlined, structured decontamination protocol **GAR-O Green-Amber-Red-Outbreak**) was developed to align cleaning actions with transmission-based precautions, required disinfection levels and validated disinfectant efficacy. Coded visual tools including signs with simple imagery were created to ensure clear communication of the appropriate disinfectant product for each precaution without compromising patient confidentiality. Flip Cards were created for Environmental Services trolleys, ensuring quick access to information to support compliance and appropriate product use. To link the **GAR-O** protocol to the precaution in use, **GAR-O** stickers were created and applied to the existing precautions posters.



Images 1-3: Example signage to be used to highlight appropriate cleaning protocol for the precaution. Designed to be customised to the facility protocols and products. Product images have been removed for this conference poster submission.

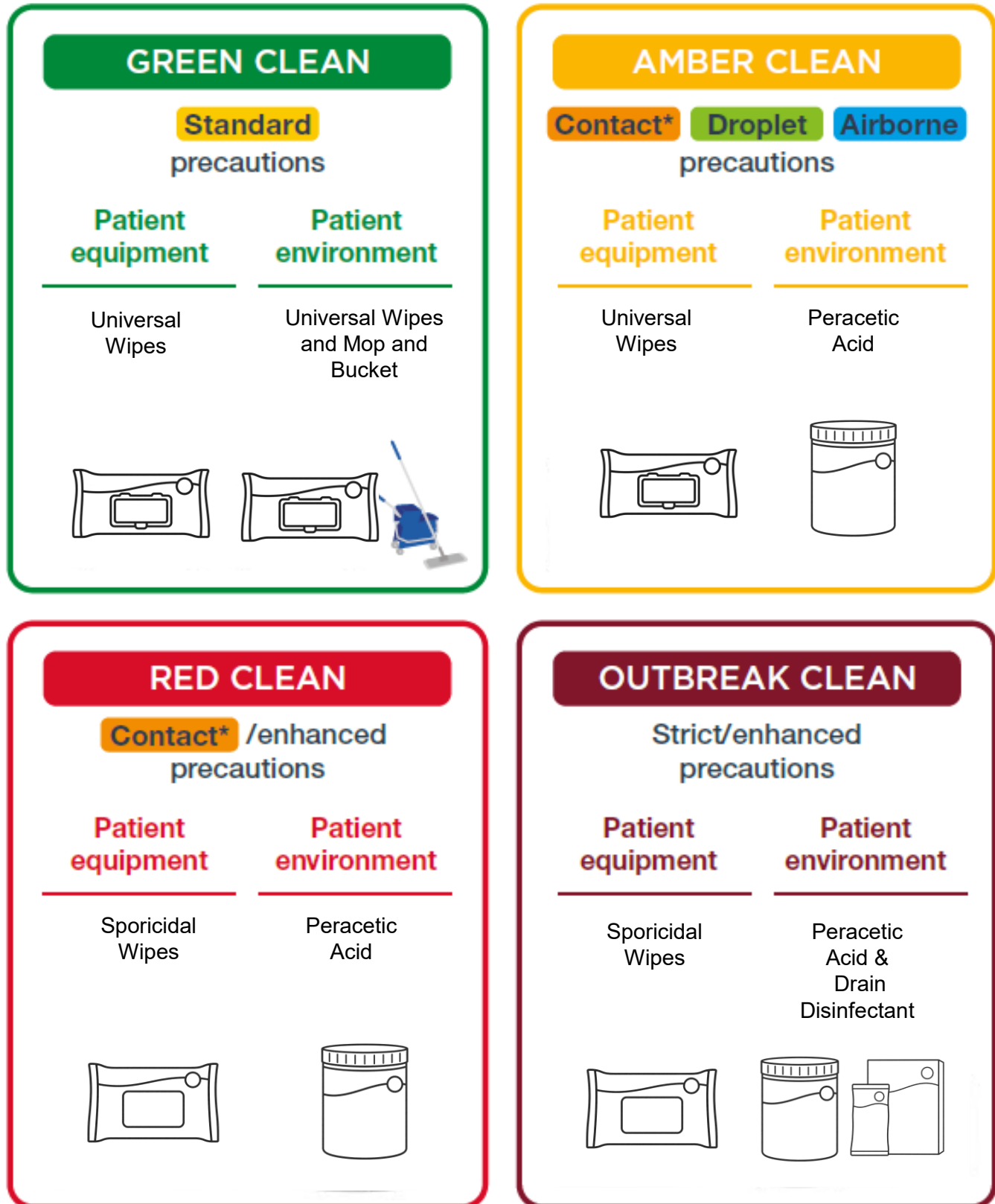


Image 4: Cleaner Flip Cards

Always follow your facility's local policies and procedures. *Follow local policy for precaution cleaning based on pathogen.

References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Transmission-based precautions. Published February 2017. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.cdc.gov/infection-control/hcp/isolation-precautions/recommendations.html>
- Health Protection Scotland. National Infection Prevention and Control Manual (NIPCM) for Scotland: Chapter 2, Transmission-Based Precautions. Updated 2024
- NHS England. Chapter 2: Transmission-based precautions (TBPs). National Infection Prevention and Control Manual for England. Published 2024. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/national-infection-prevention-and-control-manual-nipcm-for-england/chapter-2-transmission-based-precautions-tbps/>
- Public Health England. RAG (Red–Amber–Green) ratings, also known as “traffic lighting,” are used to summarise indicator values, where green denotes a “favourable” value, red an “unfavourable” value, and amber a “neutral” value. Technical Guide. Public Health England; June 20, 2017.
- World Health Organization. Transmission-based precautions for the prevention and control of infections: aide-memoire. WHO/UHL/IHS/IPC/2022.2. Published 2022. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-UHL-IHS-IPC-2022.2>
- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care & National Health and Medical Research Council. Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare. Current version: v11.27, updated 8 April 2026. https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/resources/australian-guidelines-prevention-and-control-infection-healthcare?utm_source

GAR-O™
Decontamination
protocol

Results

Healthcare organisations in several countries including Australia were introduced to the concept of the **GAR-O** protocol to improve compliance with disinfection practices. Facilities approached were in favour of introducing the **GAR-O** protocol as RAG-rated protocols report clearer compliance tracking and enhanced integration of TBPs.^{2,3} Environmental Services Managers and Infection Prevention Leads believe the implementation of **GAR-O** will improve compliance and ensure communication of key information such as appropriate disinfectant use for specific cleans removing confusion and product misuse.



Image 5: Stickers to be attached to existing precautions posters



Image 6: Example Precautions Poster with GAR-O sticker attached.

Conclusion

Standard precautions and transmission-based precautions are defined in all international guidelines.^{1,2,3,5,6} Healthcare organisations globally use these showing a consensus in adopting scientifically and clinical evidence-based protocols. The **GAR-O** protocol is a communication and escalation tool for standardising decontamination and TBPs in healthcare facilities, promoting consistency and improving compliance. **GAR-O** is a standardised framework supporting international IPC guidelines while enhancing compliance and patient safety with a potential for global application.

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