

Study: Damage to Hospital Beds Common, Posing Health Risks to Patients

Commonplace damage to hospital beds could place patients at a higher risk of infection, according to a recent study conducted by a Xavier University professor.

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Edmond A. Hooker, MD, DrPH

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The study, “Hospital mattress failures – A hidden patient danger,” evaluated 727 beds and mattresses across four midwestern U.S. hospitals, with 72% (523) of those beds showing varying degrees of damage. Researchers determined almost half (340) needed new mattress covers and one-fourth (176) required replacement of the entire mattress because of extensive damage.

“The results of this study reaffirm what previous research has shown – that cleaning methods used at hospitals today are inadequate, potentially endangering patients,” said Edmond A. Hooker, MD, DrPH, who spearheaded the study. “A mattress is arguably the most significant touchpoint of an inpatient’s experience, which makes the high rate of damage seen across hospitals a point of concern. It’s important for the healthcare industry to address this issue, which currently exposes patients to a higher risk of developing an infection.”

Beds were examined thoroughly; researchers opened each mattress and evaluated its core, used an LED light to identify small holes in mattress covers, and inspected bed frames for rust.

A unique finding in the study relates to the beds’ age. Of the mattresses in which the date of manufacture was known, more than half were less than four years old, demonstrating that hospitals should routinely inspect even recently purchased mattresses to minimize risk.

This study builds on [a previous national survey](#) that showed 52% of hospital beds have experienced mattress failures.

Dr. Hooker has taught in Xavier’s Department of Health Services Administration since 2003. He

has authored more than 60 publications in leading journals, published many book chapters, and has an active research agenda in emergency medicine, infection control and health administration.

[View the full study](#) for additional insights, including in-depth results and findings, data analysis and study limitations.

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