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The cost of failing to clean ductwork properly can be very high indeed

Dust in ductwork can propagate allergens, mould and provide a breeding/feeding ground for insects and even vermin. Poor air quality can impair staff productivity and pose a serious health risk.

Richard Norman, managing director of duct cleaning services provider Indepth Hygiene, says: "Particles in air we breathe vary greatly in size. The smallest particles - less than 10 microns across - are most hazardous as they are easily inhaled. Studies in the US and Europe show a correlation between levels of particles in the air and mortality rates. In hospitals poor air quality can be detrimental to staff and visitors alike; it can also impair



the healing process and add to the risk of cross infection and contamination."

Dust and debris found in uncleaned ductwork, combined with temperature and humidity levels, have been linked to the risk of growth and spread of MRSA and other microorganisms in hospitals.

And, apart from the clear risks associated with airborne contamination, dust can settle on surfaces rendering surface cleaning processes instantly ineffective.

According to the National Healthcare Associated Infection Research Network, patients with a healthcare associated infection are, on average, around seven times more likely to die in hospital than uninfected patients. It is estimated that as many as 5,000 patients die each year in the UK as a direct result of HCAs.

Regular inspection and cleaning of hospital ductwork is one step hospitals can take as part of their infection control procedures.

However, it is essential that duct cleaning is carried out by qualified duct cleaning specialists to current industry standards as laid down by B&ES TR/19 and the BS EN 15780.

Mechanical systems must be cleaned, maintained and inspected regularly and records kept showing evidence that ductwork continues to meet regulations. The cost of not doing so could be very high indeed, both in human terms and the cost to the NHS in treating HCAs - an estimated £1 billion a year. For further information, call 0800 587 8848, e-mail admin@indepthhygiene.co.uk or visit www.indepthhygiene.co.uk

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