

S485

Symposium

**My white coat stays**

Doctors' white coats have come under the spotlight in recent years. This follows initiatives banning the wearing of white coats in UK hospitals, as part of a series of infection control initiatives that coincided with a significant reduction in MRSA bloodstream infections. Not surprisingly, there is now widespread interest from other countries to replicate the UK model, especially following numerous studies that isolated pathogens, such as MRSA, from white coats during use. The presentation will take the contrary approach in this pro-con assessment. It will evaluate the available microbiology data related to white coat contamination and attempt to show that these results offer little, if any relevance, in terms of microbial transmissibility within health care facilities. Above all, it will look beyond the science and use this example to illustrate the potential hazards of "copy and paste" approaches of infection control initiatives that have been successful in other settings. It will emphasise, often neglected, socio-cultural aspects that need to be kept in mind to achieve sustainable change and improvement in infection prevention behaviour. This is particularly important in Europe where cultural variations between countries have been shown to be a strong driver behind MRSA epidemiological differences.