

# Cell-phone germ scare in Northern Ireland

February 10 2006

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A Northern Ireland newspaper Friday called for a ban on cell phones in hospitals due to the germs they can carry.

The Belfast Telegraph said its story about bacteria found on cell phones carried by doctors, nurses and even patients at Craigavon Area Hospital in Ulster illustrated the need to keep the devices away from patients.

"Hand-washing must be increased but until a satisfactory means of disinfecting the handsets is established, the only effective remedy is likely to be a suspension of their use by medics and patients in hospitals," the paper editorialized.

The Telegraph said this week that phones have been found to have the germs that can lead to methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, a virulent bug that is resistant to antibiotics and has killed more than 100 people in Northern Ireland since 1997.

The newspaper said that while faster communications among medical staff has benefits, the risk is too great to allow phones on the patient floors.

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