Instruments of Infection

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Some recent outbreaks of drug-resistant strains of tuberculosis have been blamed on contaminated bronchoscopes, according to two studies published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA). Bronchoscopes are instruments inserted down the throat to diagnose opportunistic infections or other conditions of the lungs. An editorial by Michael Edmond and Richard P. Wenzel of Virginia Commonwealth University Medical College suggests that if just 10 percent of the bronchoscopes used are not sterilized properly, some 460 to 2,300 patients might be exposed to tuberculosis each year. In other words, make sure your doctor properly sterilizes anything that's going down your throat.

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