

BUILDING CAPACITY TO INCREASE PATIENT SAFETY

The Ontario government has taken a number of steps to strengthen infection prevention and control in health care institutions. These initiatives include:

Executive Lead – Patient Safety

Dr. Michael Baker, physician-in-chief at the University Health Network, has been appointed Executive Lead – Patient Safety to oversee the government’s patient safety agenda.

Public Reporting

The Ontario government is introducing full public reporting on eight patient safety indicators.

Patient Safety Indicator	Start Date of Public Reporting
Clostridium difficile (<i>C. difficile</i>)	Sept. 26, 2008
Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)	Dec. 30, 2008
Vancomycin-resistant Enterococci (VRE)	Dec. 30, 2008
Hospital Standardized Mortality Ratio (HSMR) – mortality rates	Dec. 30, 2008
Rates of ventilator-associated pneumonia	April 30, 2009
Rates of central line infections	April 30, 2009
Rates of Surgical site infections	April 30, 2009
Hand hygiene compliance among health care workers	April 30, 2009

Outbreak Reporting

Hospitals are now required to immediately report *C. difficile* outbreaks to their local public health units so that Medical Officers of Health have the information they need to monitor and respond to emergent outbreaks.

Hand Hygiene Programs

Improving hand hygiene, through the use of alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water, is the single most effective way of reducing the spread of infections.

A multi-faceted hand hygiene program for all Ontario hospitals – called *Just Clean Your Hands* – was launched in March 2008. The government has provided hospitals with train-the-trainer sessions, tools and materials (including educational CD-ROMs, posters and other visual reminders), an audit process to evaluate the program’s impact, and a website for easy access to information and a place for hospitals to share lessons learned. Hospitals will be required to publicly report on hand hygiene compliance by April 30, 2009.

The government pilot tested the program in 10 hospitals in 2007 with hand hygiene compliance increasing steadily in each of the test sites.

The government has sponsored an Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) *Clean Hands Protect Lives* program which is specifically designed to educate health care patients about the importance of effective hand hygiene.

Through *Clean Hands Protect Lives*, Ontario hospitals will receive posters and useful educational printed materials for distribution to patients (such as pamphlets and “How to Clean” pocket cards).

Regional Infection Control Networks

Fourteen Regional Infection Control Networks (RICNs) have been created across the province to promote the best approaches to infection prevention and control. This includes promoting consistent infection prevention and control policies and surveillance practices.

Development of the networks has brought together infection prevention and control expertise from all health care settings, including hospital, public health, community care and long-term care homes.

Infection Prevention and Control Practitioners

The government has provided funding for 166 infection prevention and control practitioners (ICPs) in hospitals across the province. An ICP is typically a health care professional who has specialized training and expertise in infection prevention and control. The ICP works with all departments in the organization to prevent health care-acquired infections through planning, implementing, evaluating and providing feedback on current practices. They also educate health care staff on infection prevention and control, conduct surveillance and provide expert consultation as needed.

Education for Front-Line Health Care Providers

An extensive education program for infection prevention and control professionals in acute care facilities has been developed by the government in partnership with infection prevention and control experts and other stakeholders. The program provides current, evidence-based educational modules for acute care front-line health care professionals. The first three modules have been released for health care staff in acute care settings (hand hygiene, chain of infection, routine practices).

Infection Control Resource Teams

Ontario is creating Infection Control Resource Teams (ICRTs) to provide rapid, on-site assistance with outbreak investigation and management in hospitals. The teams, established through the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, would be assembled and deployed to support facilities and local public health units in outbreak situations when the Chief Medical Officer of Health determines that a need exists.

Antibiotic Usage

The Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion is working with the Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada and infectious disease expert Dr. Allison McGeer to support hospitals in the most effective use of antibiotics. This work is important because prolonged exposure to certain classes of antibiotics presents a real risk for C. difficile associated disease to emerge.

For public inquiries call ServiceOntario, INFOLine at 1-866-532-3161 (Toll-free in Ontario only)

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