

BUILDING CAPACITY TO INCREASE PATIENT SAFETY

May 28, 2008

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

Hand Hygiene Program

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 is providing 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.

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 137 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).

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