



NEWS RELEASE

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REPORTS LEAD TO ENHANCED INFECTION CONTROL PROCESSES IN VIHA

VICTORIA – A report by Dr. Richard Stanwick, Chief Medical Health Officer for the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) is resulting in new processes and practices around infection control in island hospitals and care facilities.

Following an outbreak of *Clostridium difficile* (C Diff) at Nanaimo General Regional Hospital (NRGH) that began last summer, VIHA commissioned two expert reports to provide recommendations on how to improve the health authority's response to, and management of, the outbreak. The first report, from the BC Centre of Disease Control, characterized the epidemiology of the outbreak and recommended additional interventions for NRGH specifically. All five recommendations in this report have either been implemented, or are underway.

The second, broader, report was commissioned by the VIHA Board. Dr. Stanwick was asked to conduct an internal review of the NRGH C Diff outbreak and make recommendations on how VIHA could improve systems and processes around responding to in-hospital outbreaks throughout the health authority. Dr. Stanwick's report makes 18 recommendations, all of which have been implemented, will be implemented, or are being reviewed.

"The health and wellbeing of our patients are our top priority, and our response to this outbreak was swift and aggressive," said Jac Kreut, VIHA Board Chair. "At the same time, we recognize the opportunity to improve infection control responses across the health authority, particularly as the hospital infections become more common in hospitals around the world."

In response to the reports, measures implemented in VIHA include:

- Establishing a Hospital Emergency Incident Command system to respond to outbreaks
- Designating Infection Control as a system wide priority for VIHA this year
- Improving data collection and distribution through enhanced IM/IT processes
- Continuing and improving on hand hygiene education and awareness
- Working closely with the contracted service provider for housekeeping to ensure adherence to approved infection control practices
- Removing clutter from nursing units, freeing up storage places and discarding equipment that cannot easily be cleaned (e.g. cloth upholstered furniture)

The C Diff outbreak at NRGH, originally declared in July 2008, was declared over on May 12 2009. The outbreak involved 94 cases. In five (5.3%) of those cases, C Diff was directly linked to a fatality. By comparison, a C Diff outbreak in Quebec in the first half of 2004 had 1,400 cases, with up to 80 fatalities.

“VIHA recognizes and emphasizes with the impact this outbreak had on patients, their families and our staff, “ said Dr. Owen Heisler, Executive Vice President, and Chief Medical Officer, Vancouver Island Health Authority. “At the same time, we want to thank the concerted effort of staff and physicians in VIHA whose dedication, determination and hard work eventually allowed us to declare the outbreak over.”

Both reports, along with VIHA’s response to the recommendations and actions taken, have been posted on the VIHA web site at:

http://www.viha.ca/about_viha/news/publications/infection_control_processes_reports.

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