
IMPROVING PATIENT SAFETY IN HOSPITALS*McGuinty Government Invests In Infection Control Measures***NEWS**September 26, 2008
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Ontario is boosting patient safety measures by creating infection control resource teams, funding 66 more infection prevention and control practitioners in hospitals and local health units, and supporting more effective antibiotic usage.

The announcement comes as *C. difficile* rates are being publicly reported for the first time ever in Ontario. Rates must be posted on the websites of all Ontario hospitals and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's public website, creating an unprecedented level of transparency.

Public reporting will enable hospitals to monitor *C. difficile* rates in their facilities so that the most appropriate infection control measures and highest possible standards of patient safety can be put in place.

Numbers for August 2008 show that there were 319 cases of *C. difficile* associated disease found among the 228 hospital sites in Ontario. The provincial *C. difficile* rate was 0.39 per 1,000 patient days.

This is the first time hospitals have been required to publicly report, and it will take time to establish trends. *C. difficile* rates may vary seasonally.

The Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion is also 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.

QUOTES

"We're improving patient safety as part of our commitment to ensure the highest standards of care for hospital patients in Ontario," said Health and Long-Term Care Minister David Caplan. "We're taking the steps needed to more effectively control infectious diseases in hospitals."

"The infection control initiatives announced today will help us to be prepared as new information becomes available on infection rates through the full reporting of *C. difficile* and the other patient safety indicators," said Dr. Michael Baker, executive lead, Patient Safety, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

"We are pleased to establish infection control resource teams that will work with the ministry, local public health units and hospitals to provide on-the-ground expertise that will help front-line health care workers deal effectively with infectious diseases," said Dr. Vivek Goel, president and CEO of the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion.

“Ontario's hospitals strongly support collecting and publicly reporting patient safety data that will contribute to the continuous improvement of health care in hospitals,” said Ontario Hospital Association Board Chair Mark Rochon. “This data, reported on a consistent, province-wide basis, will be an important element in our efforts to improve patient safety.”

“The Quality Healthcare Network welcomes the creation of infection control resource teams and the addition of more infection prevention and control practitioners on the ground. We believe these investments bring critically-needed resources to the front lines. It demonstrates the government’s commitment to improving patient safety in our hospitals,” said Cynthia Majewski, executive director of the Quality Healthcare Network and Ontario lead for Safer Healthcare Now.

QUICK FACTS

- In addition to today’s announcement, Ontario has previously funded 136 infection prevention and control practitioners (ICPs) in hospitals and another 180 infection control staff in public health units;
- Altogether, Ontario has now provided funding for 166 hospital ICPs – one ICP for every 100 hospital beds. This represents the best ICP to hospital bed ratio in North America.
- ICPs are health care professionals with specialized training and expertise in infection prevention and control;
- Infection control resource teams (ICRTs) will provide rapid, on-site assistance during an infectious disease outbreak when the Chief Medical Officer of Health determines that a need exists;
- ICRTs will be assembled, managed and deployed by the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion;
- Good hand hygiene is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases like C. difficile.

LEARN MORE

Learn more about Ontario’s [Patient Safety Initiative and hospital reporting](#)

Learn more about Ontario’s hand hygiene initiative [Just Clean Your Hands](#).

Read more about [infection control resource teams](#), [infection prevention and control practitioners](#), [hospital design and infection control](#), [reporting C. difficile in hospitals](#) and [C. difficile reporting in other jurisdictions](#)

Read the [announcement](#) on the full public reporting of eight patient safety indicators.

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

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