

Appendix B: Provincial Case Definitions for Reportable Diseases

Disease: *Clostridium difficile* Infection (CDI) outbreaks in public hospitals

[Known as *Clostridium difficile* associated disease (CDAD) in the regulations under the HPPA]

Revised January, 2011

***Clostridium difficile* Infection (CDI) outbreaks in public hospitals**

1.0 Provincial Reporting

Confirmed outbreaks and outbreak-associated cases occurring in hospitals under the Public Hospitals Act

2.0 Type of Surveillance

Outbreak and case level data

3.0 Outbreak Classification

CDI outbreak definitions have been revised to incorporate the concept of notification thresholds, which are more sensitive than outbreak definitions.

3.1 Notification Thresholds Definition

- For wards/units with ≥ 20 beds, 3 cases of nosocomial CDI identified on one ward/unit within a seven day period or 5 cases within a 4 week period;
OR
- For wards/units with < 20 beds, 2 cases of nosocomial CDI identified on one ward/unit within a seven day period or 4 cases within a 4 week period;
OR
- Hospitals that have a baseline CDI rate for two months that is at or above the 80th percentile for comparator hospitals;
OR
- Hospitals that have a facility rate that is greater than or equal to 2 standard deviations above their baseline.

Note: This does not apply to small hospitals with a single case of nosocomial CDI which artificially elevates the facility rate

Following consultation between the institution and the Medical Officer of Health (MOH), decisions on the declaration of an outbreak will be made based on the following two criteria:

- Significant* (as determined by the facility and health unit) increase in CDI numbers or rate compared to own baseline and/or that of comparator institutions
- Epidemiologic evidence of ongoing nosocomial transmission within the ward/unit or facility

*Significance may be determined by reviewing:

- Number of new nosocomial cases associated with the reporting ward/unit or facility;
- Historic level of CDI activity of the ward/unit or facility;
- Current trend in ward/unit CDI activity or facility rate;
- Location of current cases and possible epidemiologic links between cases;

3.2 Confirmed Case Definition

- Diarrhea* with laboratory confirmation of a positive toxin assay (A/B) for *Clostridium difficile*;
OR
- Visualization of pseudomembranes on sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy;
OR
- Histological/pathological diagnosis of pseudomembranous colitis;
OR
- Diagnosis of toxic megacolon.

*Diarrhea is defined as:

- loose/watery bowel movements (conform to the shape of the container), and
- the bowel movements are unusual or different for the patient, and
- there is no other recognized etiology for the diarrhea (for example, laxative use)

The following definitions should be used to determine whether the case is nosocomial:

3.2.1 **New nosocomial case of CDI associated with reporting facility**

- A case that meets the case definition for CDI;
AND
- CDI was not present on admission (i.e., onset of symptoms >72 hours after admission);

OR

- The infection was present at time of admission but was related to a previous admission to the same facility within the last 4 weeks.
AND
- The case has not had CDI in the past 8 weeks.

3.2.2 **New nosocomial case of CDI associated with other health care facilities**

- A case that meets the case definition for CDI;
AND
- CDI was present on admission;

OR

- The case had symptom onset <72 hours after admission;
AND
- The case was exposed to any other health care facility (including LTC) other than the reporting facility within the last 4 weeks;
AND
- The case has not had CDI in the past 8 weeks.

3.2.3 **New case of CDI associated with source other than a health care facility or indeterminate source**

- A case that meets the case definition for CDI;
AND
- CDI was present on admission;

OR

- The case had symptom onset <72 hours after admission;
AND

- There was no exposure to any health care facility within the last 4 weeks

OR

- The source of infection cannot be determined;
- AND**
- The case has not had CDI in the past 8 weeks.

4.0 Laboratory Evidence

4.1 Laboratory Confirmation

- Laboratory confirmation is not required to be classified as a confirmed ward/unit or facility-level outbreak

Positive toxin assay test is needed at the case level, with the presentation of diarrhea

4.2 Approved/Validated Tests

- *Clostridium difficile* (*C. difficile*) positive toxin assay (A/B) test

4.3 Indications and Limitations

- Laboratory testing for CDI usually involves detection of the cytotoxin(s) (A and B) produced by *C. difficile*. Cultures for *C. difficile* are not routinely done.
- Stool specimen collection should occur as soon as possible after the onset of symptoms.
- Specimens are to be collected from patients who are more than 12 months old.
- Quick turnaround time for *C. difficile* cytotoxin testing is essential and should be pre-arranged with the microbiology laboratory serving the facility.
- A single negative test should not be relied on to rule out *C. difficile*. If a single test is negative, a second specimen should be sent.
- *C. difficile* toxin testing is not reliable as a test of cure. Toxin may be detected long after clinical symptoms have resolved.
- Formed stool specimens will be rejected unless the laboratory requisition indicates the patient may have pseudomembranous colitis.

5.0 Clinical Evidence

Clinically compatible signs and symptoms are characterized by the following:

- Diarrhea (as defined above)
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and
- Abdominal pain or tenderness

C. difficile infection can lead to diseases ranging from mild diarrhea to toxic megacolon and death.

6.0 ICD Code(s)

ICD 10 Code J22a

7.0 Comments

- It should be noted that exceeding a threshold does not necessarily imply that an outbreak will be declared. Declaration of an outbreak can be made by either the institution or the MOH.
- In the event of a disagreement between the institution and the MOH, the MOH has the authority to determine if an outbreak of a communicable disease exists, for purposes of exercising statutory powers under the HPPA. Once an outbreak is declared it is reported to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care through integrated Public Health Information System (iPHIS).
- The hospital may declare an outbreak over and shall consult with the MOH in doing so. Rationale for declaring or not declaring an outbreak, and declaring an outbreak over should be documented.

8.0 References

- Control of *Clostridium difficile* Infection (CDI) Outbreaks in Hospitals, A Guide for Hospital and Health Unit Staff, December 2009.
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