

**Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care**

Hepburn Block, 10th Floor
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto ON M7A 1R3
Tele.: 416 327-4300
Fax: 416 326-1570

**Ministère de la Santé
et des Soins de longue durée**

Édifice Hepburn, 10^e étage
80 , rue Grosvenor
Toronto ON M7A 1R3
Tél.: 416 327-4300
Télééc.: 416 326-1570

Dear colleagues:

I am writing to update you on the government's patient safety agenda and in particular, infection prevention and control in hospitals.

Attached is the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's "Control of *Clostridium difficile* Infection (CDI - formerly known as *Clostridium difficile* Associated Disease) Outbreaks in Hospitals, A Guide for Hospital and Health Unit Staff, October, 2009" developed with input from public health units, Regional Infection Control Networks (RICNs) and infectious disease experts.

This guide was created to support the appropriate management of CDI outbreaks by:

- Defining the roles of the hospital and public health staff in outbreak control processes;
- Providing specific guidance for CDI outbreak control; and
- Providing a compilation of tools and resources for the management of CDI outbreaks.

Although this guide is primarily intended for hospital infection prevention and control (IPAC) teams and public health unit staff, the principles of CDI outbreak management apply to other facilities such as long-term care and retirement homes.

Please note that the outbreak definitions have been revised. They will now incorporate the concept of notification thresholds that will trigger action and dialogue between public health and hospitals to determine if an outbreak is occurring. The changes reflect the feedback we have received from you regarding the utilization of the original definitions. The Public Health Protection and Prevention Branch (PHPPB) of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (OAHPP) developed the new outbreak definitions that now incorporate notification thresholds. As well, three of the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee (PIDAC) subcommittees reviewed and contributed to finalizing the current definitions. Notification thresholds are more sensitive than outbreak definitions. Once a threshold is reached, a discussion between the local MOH and the facility is required to initiate an investigation and determine if there is an outbreak. The notification thresholds replace the existing outbreak definitions issued on September 1, 2008. The implementation date for the notification thresholds is January 1, 2010.

Thank you for your continued support as we endeavour to improve patient safety and continue to create an environment that is transparent and is committed to change. I hope you will find this document useful.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at Michael.baker@uhn.on.ca if you have any questions, or you wish to discuss the notification thresholds and/or outbreak management guide further or have suggestions for the content of future letters.

Sincerely,

Michael A Baker, CM, O.Ont, MD
Executive Lead, Patient Safety, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Attachment

- c: The Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
- Ron Sapsford, Deputy Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
- Ontario Hospital Association
- Dr. Arlene King, Chief Medical Officer of Health