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Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Infection control better as a result of hospital audits

TORONTO, Jan. 13 /CNW/ - The McGuinty government today released the results of the hospital infection control audits Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman requested in November 2003, marking a fundamental step forward in improving patient safety. Infection control is better in Ontario hospitals as a result of the hospital audits.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has received reports from every Ontario hospital confirming they have done a thorough review of their infection control procedures and have proper infection control measures in place.

"I want to congratulate Ontario's hospitals for the leadership they have demonstrated by auditing their infection control practices and ensuring the highest infection control standards for Ontario patients," Minister of Health and Long-Term Care George Smitherman said. "In partnership with the Ministry and the Ontario Hospital Association, Ontario hospitals have made tangible improvements to their infection control practices and have done so clearly and transparently."

"Ontario citizens should have greater confidence in their hospitals as a result of this audit," said Hilary Short, President and CEO, Ontario Hospital Association. "Infection control is a top priority in Ontario hospitals and we fully support the need to regularly review and continuously strengthen our safety standards for our patients and our employees."

A rigorous infection control audit will be built into hospitals' ongoing monitoring and reporting to the Ministry and the public. In response to the infection control situation at Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Centre and Lakeridge Health Corporation, the Minister directed all hospitals on November 14, 2003 to perform a thorough audit of their systems and processes for infection control and to have the report signed by the hospital CEO, Chair of the Board and Chief of the Medical Advisory Committee. Hospitals were instructed to review:

- Performance and thoroughness relating to compliance with policies and procedures on sterilization of equipment and facilities.
- Role and accountability of each hospital's infection control committee and specialists for all infectious disease protocols.
- How each hospital's infectious disease standards are communicated to

staff and monitored.

The Ministry and the Ontario Hospital Association sent an audit tool to all hospitals to guide the review. In addition, hospitals were directed to immediately notify affected patients and the Ministry of any concerns related to infection control and prevention, including equipment sterilization.

"I expect all hospitals to continue to be accountable for having the most stringent infection control standards," said Smitherman. "I thank all the infection control staff for doing the audits during one of the busiest times of the year."

The infection control audit builds on the statutory duty of a hospital administrator under the Health Protection and Promotion Act for reporting reportable and communicable diseases. Also, under the Public Hospitals Act, hospitals are responsible for establishing occupational health and safety programs including the safe use of substances, equipment and medical devices.

Click here to view detailed hospital infection control audit:

<http://files.newswire.ca/91/audit.doc>

This news release is available on our website at:

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca>

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