

MEDIA RELEASE



Infection Prevention – It's In Your Hands

Infection Prevention & Control Week 23rd to 27th October

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Northeast Health Wangaratta's (NHW) Infection Prevention & Control team are leading the way in implementing strategies and new approaches to tackling hospital acquired infections in patients. An Alcoholic Hand Rub called DeBug has now been introduced into all clinical areas of NHW, providing a much needed alternative to traditional soap and water hand washing.

In 2004, the Victorian Quality Council (VQC) implemented a pilot project in six Victorian health services (two regional/rural and four metropolitan). The Victorian Minister for Health has publicly supported the project by allocating a further \$2.3 million of funding to support the statewide roll out of the project in 2006. NHW Infection Control Consultant Jason O'Keeffe said that "minimising the risk for patients, staff, visitors and volunteers is a key priority. With over 15,000 patient admissions each year and more than 1000 staff, the NHW Infection Prevention & Control Unit provides a wide range of services including a staff health program co-ordinated by Kim Green, an ongoing education program, a range of surveillance activities and more recently a hand hygiene campaign". Mr. O'Keeffe says, "hand hygiene (hand washing) is the single most effective measure in the prevention of hospital acquired infections. We have been fortunate to receive funding from the VQC to introduce a program based on a model developed by Austin Health".

NHW Project Co-ordinator, Roger Gregory said, "NHW was one of six hospitals in the state to receive funding for this project in 2004. Since the introduction of an alcoholic hand rub on the end of each bed, hand hygiene compliance has improved more than 28%, with a coinciding reduction of Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (commonly called 'golden staph') infections. Our staff and patients have embraced this culture change program which is designed to make hand hygiene easier, and hospitals a safer place to be".

The success at each of the six pilot hospitals in improving hand hygiene compliance and reducing infections has led to the launch of a Victorian wide rollout of the program sponsored by the VQC. The VQC will incorporate the information and experience gained in the pilot project sites to support the design and development of the program in implementing a practical model for sustained improvement in hand hygiene practices in Victorian hospitals. NHW is now the co-ordinating site for a stage one roll out of a hand hygiene campaign into 16 hospitals in the Hume Region. Renae Jacob, Project Co-ordinator for the Hume region program said that the Hume region hospitals have embraced the program and are leading the way in fighting hospital acquired infections.

"We are in an extremely fortunate position and have achieved significant improvements in 18 months. The challenge ahead is to sustain these improvements and continue to provide a safe environment for our patients, and continue to replicate these improvements in the Hume Region Hospitals", says Jason O'Keeffe.

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