

Press Release

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RUH MAKING PROGRESS IN TACKLING HOSPITAL INFECTIONS

The Royal United Hospital (RUH) is making sustained progress in tackling healthcare acquired infections.

Francesca Thompson, director of nursing at the RUH says: "It's important to emphasise that the trust has a major action plan in place to tackle hospital acquired infections, and we are beginning to show real improvements. Year on year MRSA bacteraemia rates are falling and there has been similar success in tackling C.Diff. Our average monthly rate of Clostridium Difficile (C.Diff) is around 40, in September we recorded eight, this is the lowest figure since we began to collect this information in 2003. September was a spectacular month - there wasn't a single MRSA bacteraemia."

Latest figures from the Health Protection Agency (HPA) reflect the beginning of the progress in this area. From April – June 2007 there were 140 cases of Clostridium difficile (C.diff) compared with 144 in the Jan- March 2007 period. Since the reporting of these figures, C.diff rates have again decreased - significantly.

The HPA figures on MRSA bacteraemias are down from the same period last year, but show an increase of 4 cases in the April - June 2007 period, (15) compared with 11 in the previous quarter. This is partly explained by a high number of cases in June, (8), of which 5 were community acquired. In July there were only 2 cases, (also community acquired) and none in September.

The RUH is collaborating with local primary care trusts in reviewing all cases. This 'joined up' working will ultimately benefit all patients. In addition, the RUH has recently increased the number of patients that are screened for MRSA, particularly those undergoing elective surgery.

The hospital has recently introduced new measures to reduce the risk of infection. In September it embarked on a high profile campaign, in line with national NHS initiatives, in which uniform rules were changed to ensure staff members were bare below the elbows to ensure rigorous hand washing and high levels of hygiene.

Visiting hours in the hospital have also been reduced, to take place at specific times, and visitors are being asked to use hand gel or soap to clean their hands on entering and leaving wards. Regular cleaning audits have shown improvements since the introduction of the new visiting times. Francesca Thompson says cleanliness remains a top priority: "The trust has been concentrating efforts on reducing C.diff and key actions include monitoring use of antibiotics, the prompt isolation of patients with C.diff and ensuring high levels of cleaning, including annual deep cleans of all wards. We are getting a lot of things right, but are not complacent, and reducing hospital acquired infection continues to be one of the trust's key goals."

Ends

Issued by the communications office. For more information please contact 01225 825849