

## Press Release

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### **RUH continues to tackle Healthcare Associated Infections**

Latest national figures published by the Health Protection Agency show that the Royal United Hospital (RUH) is making real improvements in tackling healthcare associated infections.

Reducing rates of *Clostridium difficile* (*C.diff*) and MRSA is a top priority for the RUH and a prime concern for patients and their relatives. In recent months a series of measures has been introduced by the trust to further improve hygiene and reduce infection.

The latest quarterly figures (July – September 07) published by the Health Protection Agency show that infection rates have been steadily reducing at the RUH. *C.diff* rates in patients over 65 for the period July – September totalled 42 cases compared with 89 the previous quarter. From average monthly rates of around 40 cases at the start of the year, in September the RUH recorded just 8, the lowest figure since information was first collected in 2003. There was similar improvement in the number of MRSA bacteraemias for July – September 2007 which totalled 6 compared with 15 the previous quarter. This downward trend is being experienced nationally also.

Francesca Thompson, Director of nursing at the RUH says tackling healthcare associated infections is top of the trust's agenda. "The RUH has been concentrating efforts on reducing MRSA bacteraemias and *C.diff*. Key actions include monitoring the use of antibiotics, the prompt isolation of patients with infection and ensuring high levels of hand hygiene and cleaning, including annual deep cleans of all wards.

“We have procedures in place which help us to isolate patients with infections quickly and reduce the risk of cross infection to others.

In July we opened a 10 bedded ward for those patients identified with *C.diff* where they can receive the tailored nursing care and treatment that they need. This has proved to be one of the key measures in successfully reducing *C.diff* cases at the RUH over recent months. Then in November after a £700,000 refit, we reopened a ward with additional side rooms with en-suite facilities for those with infections.

“The RUH is delighted to be making good progress in improving infection control but we recognise that we have more to do and will be working closely with our primary care colleagues to tackle this across the whole local health community. “

### **Notes to Editors**

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) quarterly report on MRSA/*C.diff* infection figures nationally is published today. See HPA website for more info.

At the RUH, recently adopted measures to reduce hospital acquired infections include:

1. An additional £100,000 invested in deep cleaning ward and patient areas and 8 extra cleaners employed for deep cleaning only. In November the trust received a “good” rating from the Patient Environment Action Team (PEAT) for its cleanliness standards. (This is a national survey)
2. In September the RUH 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.
3. 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 in hand hygiene since the introduction of the new visiting times.

Ends

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