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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### ***Celebrity Doctor Helps Launch Hospital's 'United in Hand Hygiene' Campaign***

A campaign to raise awareness about keeping infections out of the Royal United Hospital Bath, is being launched by the celebrity GP and television presenter, Dr Hilary Jones, on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April.

The RUH is hosting a week long series of events (21<sup>st</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> April ) to launch innovation and wide ranging schemes designed to reduce infections which are brought into the hospital from outside and to ensure that our own infection control procedures are correctly followed by all our staff.

Events planned for the week include giving visitors, patients and staff an opportunity to see 'bugs' on their hands, not visible to the naked eye; to give their opinion on new cleaning products for the hospital and see what infections can be carried on unwashed hands.

There will be large posters throughout the hospital, which will also be going into the community, advising people about the risks of bringing infections into the hospital along with menu style cards on tables in public areas.

A magazine style booklet, talking about the various types of infection, how we have specialised teams to manage them, and advice for patients and visitors will also be launched during the week and again will go out to several public areas such as libraries, GP surgeries, council offices etc.

Francesca Thompson, the hospital's Director of Nursing said,

*"As a hospital and part of a community we have made tremendous progress over the last year. This campaign is about taking our achievements even further and being united in our efforts. The washing of hands remains the single most important contribution that everyone can make to reach our goal in reducing infections."*

Specialists from the Department of Health have been invited to look at our good practice and work with our infection control team analysing how we measure results and process information. They will spend a day at the hospital during that week.

Dr Jones has recently spoken on national radio about the importance of not bringing infection into hospitals and steps that the public can take to minimise the risks of doing so. He is supporting the work of the RUH in minimising infection. He said

*"I'm delighted to be involved in the on-going work that the RUH is doing in the vital battle to overcome the problem of hospital infections. However committed the staff are, we desperately need the public – who after all, are potential in-patients themselves – to fully understand how these bugs are transmitted and what they can do as individuals to help. It's all about team-work and I'm proud to be part of that team".*

Recent figures show that the RUH has made significant improvements in tackling Health Care Associated Infections. As the figures show, our greatest area of improvement for 2007-08 is tackling Clostridium difficile but there have been major improvements in dealing with MRSA as well.

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Despite the prevalence of norovirus within the community and surrounding areas, the RUH had a good record of success this year in managing to keep the hospital running efficiently and any outbreaks being resolved quickly and as a matter of priority .

***Media launch will be at 12.45pm on 23<sup>rd</sup> April.. Can you attend at the Main Hospital Reception in the Atrium at 12.40pm from where you will be escorted to the venue. There will be an opportunity to talk to Dr Jones, staff and some patients. The latter will be of course, subject to their agreement***

**Editors notes:**

**Good hand hygiene is the single most important action to prevent spread of infection control**

**Right handed people tend to wash their left hand more than their right and visa versa**

**We have between 2 & 10 million bacteria between our fingertips and elbows**

**Damp hands spread 1,000 times more germs than dry hands, so it's important to dry them properly**

**Germs can stay alive on unwashed hands for up to 3 hours**

**Up to half of men and quarter of women don't wash their hands after going to the toilet. Where other people are in a public bathroom as witnesses both men & women are more likely to wash their hands**

**The average person touches their face (eyes, nostrils and lips), 26 times per hour – the main entry sites for germs and other bacteria which cause diarrhoea and respiratory illnesses..**

**Millions of germs hide under watches and bracelets and there are about as many germs under your ring as there are people in Europe!**

**90% of germs on hands are under nails! keep them well trimmed.**

- *Clostridium difficile is an infection caused by bacteria and produces spores that can live in the environment for a long time. The bacteria are shed in faeces and touching even the smallest amount of infected faeces and then touching your mouth can cause illness. It is spread from person to person through poor hygiene, not washing hands after using the toilet or handling certain raw foods, touching surfaces infected by the bacteria – again often from poor hand hygiene. The risk of spreading CDif can be minimised by thoroughly washing hands with soap and warm water after visiting the toilet, changing a nappy, before and after preparing food and before visiting patients in hospital.*
- *Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureas (MRSA). They are resistant to methicillin, a type of penicillin and often to some other types of antibiotics which are used to treat staphylococcus aureas. In general, healthy people are at very low risk of being infected by MRSA but as carriers, they can transfer it to those more vulnerable – such as poorly patients. Again it is most commonly spread by hands and equipment and providing hands are not actually soiled, rubbing with the alcohol gels provided on all hospital wards, before and after visiting a patient will help reduce the risk significantly.*
- *Types of Norovirus – symptoms include vomiting, diarrhoea, headaches – can be spread to a patient if they are visited by someone who already has the infection or has not been clear of it for at least 3 days before visiting. Staying away from the hospital if you are infected is advised and again staying away will also reduce risk to a healthy visitor if someone in the hospital is already suffering*