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## **WRHA LAUNCHES HAND HYGIENE CAMPAIGN TO BETTER PROTECT PATIENTS; DECREASE OUTBREAKS**

*Health-care providers reminded keeping hands clean is a professional standard*

The Winnipeg Health Region has launched an aggressive four-point campaign to remind all health-care providers to reduce the risk of infections and outbreaks among patients and residents by regularly cleaning their hands either with an alcohol-based rub or soap and water.

“Twenty years ago, hospital-acquired infections were the 11<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in Canada,” WRHA President & CEO Arlene Wilgosh said. “Now they are number four, surpassed only by cancer, heart disease and stroke. This is a serious ongoing issue that poses a real and very significant risk to those we care for. Something new has to be done to address it.”

The campaign has four components:

- **Ongoing auditing & reporting** - The Region will continue to audit proper hand hygiene audits on a quarterly basis and will post audit results on-line;
- **Professional requirements** - All health-care providers will be reminded that proper hand hygiene is a required standard of practice;
- **Consequences** – Any staff member who routinely fails to meet this standard of practice will go through a progressive discipline process; and
- **Patient, resident & client involvement** – All patients, residents and clients have a right to receive their care in a safe environment. They and family members will be informed that they have the right to ensure their health-care providers practice proper hand hygiene by asking them if they have cleaned their hands.

The Region has contacted and met with representatives of the regulatory colleges that represent health-care professionals and sought their input and cooperation into this undertaking.

“Hand washing is a required practice by the College of Physicians and Surgeons,” Bill Pope, Registrar of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba said. “Hands are a physician’s most important tool; we expect them to use clean equipment and we expect them to clean their hands.”

Diane Wilson-Mate, co-chair of the Manitoba Alliance of Regulatory Colleges said the issue is one of accountability. “Health-care providers are responsible for the health of the public in a number of ways,” Wilson-Mate who is also the Registrar of the College of Registered Nurses, said. “It is important for all health-care practitioners not only to adhere to the standards but to lead by example and practice proper hand hygiene.”

“We applaud the WRHA for launching this dynamic approach to furthering a culture that clearly states that lack of hand washing is not acceptable as well as their commitment to make information on hand washing rates open to the public,” said Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety’s Executive Director Laurie Thompson. “Patient Safety is everyone’s business and responsibility.”

Accreditation Canada has also been made aware of the Region’s ongoing efforts in this area. Proper hand hygiene is a required organizational practice of Accreditation Canada. Accreditation by this national organization is now legally required in Manitoba as a result of the latest amendments to the RHA Act.

The Region’s public awareness campaign is being launched today. Stickers reminding staff, volunteers, visitors and patients of the importance of proper hand hygiene will start to be distributed this month. As well, the results of the Region’s hand hygiene audits are now posted on-line at [www.wrha.mb.ca](http://www.wrha.mb.ca)

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