



The Scarborough Hospital leads province in hand hygiene

TORONTO (April 30, 2009) – With swine flu dominating the headlines, and a renewed focus on the importance of hand hygiene in preventing the spread of infections and diseases, The Scarborough Hospital is proud to top the list in the province's first-ever public reporting of hand hygiene compliance.

“Growing concern around swine flu has given a heightened awareness about the importance of proper handwashing. These results come at an important time. We are very pleased that The Scarborough Hospital is the provincial leader in hand hygiene compliance,” says Dr. John Wright, President and CEO of The Scarborough Hospital.

The Scarborough Hospital's overall compliance rate was 97 percent, well above the provincial average of 61 percent.

“This success is the result of a strong commitment by our staff and physicians at The Scarborough Hospital to patient safety and care. We made hand hygiene a corporate priority. We worked very hard to get the message out that handwashing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of infections, but it is the staff and physicians who turned that into action. I am extremely proud of the entire team,” says Dr. Wright.

Today, for the first time, handwashing rates were publicly reported for all Ontario hospitals by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. In September, 2008, the Ministry began a phased-in program requiring hospitals to post specific patient safety indicators.

It has been estimated that in Canada 20,000 people suffer from hospital acquired infections and 8,000 people die as a result each year. A 20 percent improvement in hand hygiene compliance could reduce the rate of infection by 40 percent, according the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

“We set our goal high at The Scarborough Hospital. We aimed for a 95 percent compliance rate and wanted to be among the best in Ontario. We are thrilled we beat our goal and are the best in the province,” says Lindsey Crawford, Vice President, Patient Services. “Proper hand hygiene is essential in the work that we do and today's results prove that we take that seriously.”

The Scarborough Hospital launched an intense hand hygiene campaign in February when walls at both the General and Grace campuses were plastered with colourful handprints. Then handprints started showing up on screensavers, internal newsletters and on the hospital intranet.

“When the campaign began, we all knew we should wash our hands regularly, but how and when we do it makes all the difference,” says Khem Sukhraj,

Patient Care Manager, Surgery at the Grace campus. “The results today show that through our campaign we have successfully made proper hand hygiene second nature.”

“The intention of this campaign was to permanently change handwashing behaviour and thus safeguard ourselves, our families and our patients,” says Crawford. “We started with some not-so-subtle clues, engaging the staff and getting patients and visitors talking about hand hygiene.”

Posters, buttons, t-shirts and internal messaging continued throughout the campaign, thanks to the work of more than 100 hand hygiene “champions” who jumped on board to spread our campaign message: *Just Clean Them: It’s the right thing to do.*

Key to the campaign was ensuring all staff and physicians were educated on the key moments of hand hygiene and proper handwashing technique.

To see a demonstration of proper handwashing technique or arrange an interview with Lindsey Crawford or Khem Sukhraj please contact:

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