



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

inspiring strength, dignity and compassion

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NHH marks National Infection Control Week with launch of new education campaigns aimed at hand hygiene dos and don'ts

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Wednesday, October 22, 2008 – Staff members and volunteers joined forces this week at Northumberland Hills Hospital to kick-off the Ontario Hospital Association's new *Clean Hands Protect Lives* program.

Launched in conjunction with *Just Clean Your Hands*, a complementary program directed at health-care providers, *Clean Hands Protect Lives* is a new patient-focused initiative aimed at educating patients on the latest best practices related to infection control.

"We know that effective hand hygiene practices in hospitals play a very important role in improving patient and provider safety, and in preventing the spread of infection," said Joan Ross, President and CEO. "Working with effective new education materials supplied by the Ontario Hospital Association, NHH is emphasizing throughout our organization the simple message that "Clean Hands Protect Lives."

Said Myonne Allan, NHH's Director of Laboratory Services and Infection Control, "While we know much more than we did 20 years ago about how germs are spread, many people are still convinced that they practice effective infection control. In fact, studies show that this is not yet the case—either people are not washing properly or they are not washing often enough—so there is still much we can do in the way of educating all people within our hospitals today."

Today's event at NHH featured demonstrations with the "glo germ" system, an effective tool that illuminates the areas missed on hands when the proper washing techniques are not followed. Beginning at 10:00, nursing students, volunteers and hospital staff were stationed at the front entrance of the hospital, offering incoming visitors and patients a demonstration of this critical first line of defense against infection. Information was provided on the effectiveness of washing with soap and water (the recommended technique when hands are visibly soiled) and alcohol-based hand-rub (the recommended technique for countering invisible but potentially harmful bacteria).

More than a one-day push, the *Clean Hands Protect Lives* program is designed for longevity. In addition to a poster, pamphlet and pocket card campaign, the information is being integrated this month into the admission and day-to-day patient care processes at NHH. On admission, all patients at NHH will soon begin receiving literature explaining their role in preventing the spread of disease, with handouts on how to apply alcohol-based hand-rub and when. Nursing and other health-care providers will also review the best practices with patients during their stay, to ensure that good hand hygiene practices remain top-of-mind.

“All it takes is one person to spread an infection, adds Myonne Allan. “Only by working together (patients, staff, volunteers and visitors) can we stop infections from traveling within our hospital and within our community. With C. difficile, MRSA and VRE in the spotlight today, we’re hoping to take advantage of the public interest to get the message out there that *Clean Hands Protect Lives* and it’s a joint effort.”

For more information, please contact Jennifer Gillard at 905-377-7757 or jgillard@nhh.ca

About Northumberland Hills Hospital – The Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto. The 137-bed acute care hospital delivers a broad range of core services, including medical/surgical care, complex/long-term care, rehabilitation, palliative care, obstetrical care and intensive care. NHH also sponsors a Community Mental Health Centre and an Assertive Community Treatment Team. The hospital serves the catchment area of west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of approximately 60,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs over 500 people and is an active member of the Central East LHIN. For more information, please visit www.nhh.ca.