



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE/PUBLIC NOTICE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Non-symptomatic VRE outbreak - no restrictions for hospital visitors at this time

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, December 1, 2011 – Seven (7) confirmed cases of Vancomycin Resistant *Enterococcus* (VRE) have been identified on two medical units (2A and 2B) at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH). The patients affected are not sick from the bacteria and are carriers only.

While not required to publicly report cases of non-symptomatic or dormant VRE, NHH has chosen to bring the outbreak to the public's attention in an effort to reiterate the importance of hand hygiene now and at all times in the hospital environment and community.

Control measures are in place at NHH to minimize the spread of this outbreak, including:

- **Proper hand hygiene** - As noted above, this remains one of the most important infection prevention and control practices to stop transmission of VRE and other infectious diseases.
- **Proactive communication** - NHH has posted outbreak warnings on the main hospital entrance as well as to the doorways of the affected and surrounding units, with reminders regarding hand hygiene.
- **Contact precautions** - All identified cases have been placed on contact precautions (isolation). Patients on contact precautions are expected to remain in their room except where medically indicated.
- **Enhanced environmental cleaning** - Increased cleaning of the units, including the removal of unnecessary clutter and increased cleaning of equipment shared between patient rooms, is underway.
- **Monitoring** - Monitoring for VRE will be ongoing. Strict attention to screening all admitted patients for antibiotic resistant organisms is critical to ensure early identification and isolation.

NHH remains fully operational, with programs and services across the hospital unaffected.

Visitors are welcome and visiting hours are unchanged. NHH expects visitors to be diligent in practicing appropriate hand hygiene and infection prevention and control practices when visiting the hospital. Frequent hand washing, particularly before and after patient contact, is mandatory and vital to reducing health care-associated infections.

Updates will be provided.

Background:

What is VRE?

Enterococci are bacteria found normally in the intestinal tract (bowels) of most individuals, and on high contact surfaces such as toilet seats, door handles and bedpans. Generally the bacteria do not cause harm, but sometimes they can lead to infection. Vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE) are strains of *enterococci* that are resistant to the antibiotic vancomycin. If a person has an infection caused by VRE, such as a urinary tract infection or bloodstream infection, it may be more difficult to treat.

At NHH, rates of hospital-acquired cases of the major infections remain consistently low. Many infections are publicly reported, including Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA), VRE, Central Line Infections and Ventilator-Associated Pneumonia (click here for details: <http://www.nhh.ca/AboutNHH/QualityandSafety.aspx>). NHH has had 0 infections for fiscal year 2010/11 and 0 for YTD (2011/12 through to the end of September) for all of the above, including VRE. Carriers of VRE are not publicly reported (i.e., cases of patients without symptoms present).

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

About Northumberland Hills Hospital – Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, and obstetrical care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care, rehabilitation and palliative care. Mental health care, chemotherapy, dialysis and 16 other ambulatory care clinics are offered on an outpatient basis through partnerships with regional centres and nearby specialists. NHH offers a full range of diagnostic services, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) and mammography. 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 Alwick/Haldimand. NHH employs approximately 600 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians and volunteers. NHH is an active member of the Central East Local Health Integration Network. For more information, please visit www.nhh.ca.