

# News Release

1 November 2007

## **C diff decreasing at Dorset County Hospital**

Dorset County Hospital is making significant progress in reducing cases of the clostridium difficile (c diff) infection on its wards.

Figures released today (Nov 1) by the Health Protection Agency show that the c diff rate has fallen from 3.99 per 1,000 bed days for 2006 to 3.08 for the latest quarter (April to June 2007).

The hospital introduced a robust plan to tackle c diff in April this year and has seen a marked improvement.

Director of Nursing and Infection Prevention and Control Alison Tong said the hospital had been working hard to combat infections such as c diff.

Ms Tong explained: "We have strengthened our infection prevention and control team so we now have a dedicated infection control doctor and nurse consultant, as well as an antimicrobial pharmacist. These individuals have had a significant impact on reducing our infection rates already.

"Our staff are now skilled and well equipped to manage patients with c diff safely. Cleanliness and the environment in which we care for patients is a top priority for the Trust Board and every member of staff at Dorset County Hospital."

Ms Tong added that to avoid misleading the public, it should be pointed out that the c diff figures for Dorset County Hospital include cases that have been contracted out in the community, in places such as residential nursing homes and community hospitals.

"All the cases of c diff that come through our hospital labs for testing are included in our rates," she explained. "Around a quarter of the infections included in our figures are contracted out in the community setting rather than Dorset County Hospital.

"We are continuing to work to reduce infection rates despite a significant reduction in the first quarter of 2007.

"It is also important to emphasise that there are various strains of c diff. We have not identified any cases of the 027 strain which hit the headlines recently following the deaths of patients at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust."

If anyone would like more information or is concerned about infections within hospitals, they are welcome to contact Dorset County Hospital's Infection Prevention and Control Nurse Consultant Anne Smith on 01305 254343.

**Background on C Diff:**

According to the Health Protection Agency, clostridium difficile is present in the gut of up to 3% of healthy adults and 66% of infants. It rarely causes problems in children or healthy adults, as it is kept in check by the normal bacterial population of the intestine. When certain antibiotics disturb the balance of bacteria in the gut, clostridium difficile can multiply rapidly and produce toxins which cause illness.

Clostridium difficile infection ranges from mild to severe diarrhoea to, more unusually, severe inflammation of the bowel (known as pseudomembranous colitis). People who have been treated with broad spectrum antibiotics (those that affect a wide range of bacteria), people with serious underlying illnesses and the elderly are at greatest risk – over 80% of clostridium difficile infections reported are in people aged over 65 years.

Clostridium difficile infection is usually spread by people who come into contact with infected patients or with environmental surfaces (e.g. floors, toilets) contaminated with the bacteria or its spores. Spores are produced when clostridium difficile bacteria encounter unfavourable conditions, such as being outside the body. They are very hardy and can survive on clothes and environmental surfaces for long periods.

**ENDS**

**For more information about this news release please contact Communications Manager Susie Palmer on 01305 254683 or [susie.palmer@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:susie.palmer@dchft.nhs.uk) or Director of Nursing Alison Tong on 01305 254645**