



Region's Hospitals to benefit from hand hygiene project

Following the success of an infection control project at Bendigo Health, other district hospitals are now beginning to benefit.

Bendigo Health Infection Prevention and Control team have been leading the way in implementing strategies and new approaches to tackling hospital acquired infections in patients. Now, Bendigo Health is co-ordinating the roll out of a hand hygiene campaign into 16 hospitals in the Loddon Mallee Region.

In 2004, an alcoholic hand rub was introduced into all clinical areas of Bendigo Health, providing a much needed alternative to traditional soap and water hand washing. Bendigo Health was one of six hospitals (two regional and four metropolitan) chosen by the Victorian Quality Council (VQC) to take part in the pilot scheme.

The success at each of the six pilot hospitals in improving hand hygiene compliance and reducing infections has led to the launch of a Victorian wide rollout of the program sponsored by the VQC, the Victorian Minister for Health allocating a further \$2.3 million of funding to support the statewide roll out of the project this year.

According to Bendigo Health's Infection Prevention Control Manager Jane Hellsten, hand hygiene is the single most effective measure in the prevention of hospital acquired infections.

"Minimising the risk for patients, staff, visitors and volunteers has been and still is a key priority. With 25,000 patient admissions each year in the acute hospital alone, and more than 3,000 staff, Bendigo Health Infection Prevention and Control Unit provides a wide range of services, including a staff health program, an ongoing education program, a range of surveillance activities and a hand hygiene program," Ms Hellsten said.

"Since the introduction of an alcoholic hand rub on the end of each bed, hand hygiene is now easier, making hospitals safer. The challenge ahead is to sustain the improvements of the past 18 months, continue to provide a safe environment for our patients, and replicate these improvements in other Loddon Mallee Region Hospitals," Ms Hellsten said. Additional resources have been based at Bendigo Health to co-ordinate the Loddon Mallee Region Hand Hygiene Rollout, which has just started.

The following are some hospitals now participating in the above project - Manangatang & District Hospital, Swan Hill District Hospital and Robinvale District Hospital & Health Service.