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Hospitals launch campaign aimed at infection prevention

(VANCOUVER) Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) and Providence Health Care (PHC), in partnership with the Pharmaceuticals Division of Bayer HealthCare, are launching today a hand hygiene campaign in all directly funded hospitals and extended care facilities across the region.

Clean Hands for Life™ will focus on improving hand hygiene practices among 16,000 healthcare and contracted service workers working in acute and residential care settings in urban and rural communities, while promoting the same practices to visitors, family members and the general public. Over the next 12 months staff will learn more about the effectiveness of good hand hygiene through a high profile information campaign.

“Research shows that frequent and thorough hand hygiene is the single most important factor in preventing infection and reducing the spread of bacteria and viruses, in health care facilities,” says Dr. Elizabeth Bryce, Regional Medical Director, Infection Control, VCH. “We want to improve hand hygiene in order to improve patient safety in all health care settings.”

The *Clean Hands for Life* campaign is modeled along similar initiatives that have been undertaken in European hospitals. By introducing several key campaign elements over the course of a year and undertaking a wide-reaching information campaign, the hospitals expect to see similar improvements in hand hygiene and a corresponding improvement in infection and transmission rates.

Bayer HealthCare is generously contributing its time and expertise in developing all the promotional materials for the campaign including posters, brochures and buttons, as well as portable antiseptic hand rub dispensers. Two poster contests – one open to staff and the other open to their children – will allow health care providers and their families to actively participate in developing hand hygiene messages.

“As a leading anti-infective company, Bayer HealthCare is pleased to be a partner in this campaign. We support appropriate infection control and this campaign will serve to curb transmission of micro-organisms causing infections in the hospital environment,” said Dr. Thom Segerson, Vice President Medical and Scientific Affairs at Bayer Healthcare.

The effectiveness of the campaign will be determined by assessing improved hand hygiene compliance to be measured on several fronts, such as measuring volumes of hand rub and soap used over the course of the year; and by surveying staff, patients and visitors about which elements of the campaign were most successful in changing their hand hygiene behaviour.

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Clean Hands for Life is part of VCH's and PHC's ongoing efforts to improve patient safety by strengthening infection control measures across the region. Over the past two years they have increased the number of Infection Control Practitioners, assigned an Epidemiologist to track and monitor infections, and undertaken renovations to Emergency Departments to better isolate and treat those patients with communicable diseases. Investing both capital and human resources in this area is resulting in shorter hospital stays and better health outcomes for patients and clients.

VCH is responsible for the delivery of \$1.9 billion in acute, residential and community care to over one million people in communities from Richmond through Vancouver, the North Shore, Sunshine Coast, Sea to Sky area, Powell River, Bella Bella and Bella Coola.

PHC is Canada's largest faith-based healthcare organization, operating six sites in Vancouver that offer services ranging from specialty acute care to residential care for the elderly.

Bayer HealthCare is a business group of Bayer Inc. Canada and one of the world's leading, innovative companies in the healthcare and medical products industry. It is dedicated to finding cures, improving treatments, and providing better products and information to enable Canadians and their families to live healthy lives.

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