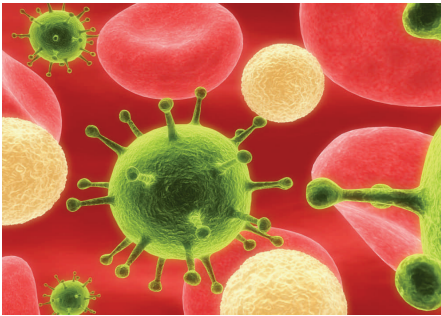


SUPERBUGS

Get the facts about hospital-acquired infections



Hospital-acquired infections (HAIs) are the fourth largest killer in Canada.

Each year, 220,000-250,000 hospital-acquired infections result in 8,000-12,000 deaths. 40 per cent of these deaths are in Ontario.

Studies suggest that hospital-acquired infections kill between 3,200 and 5,000 Ontarians each year.

Thirty to fifty per cent of these hospital-acquired infections are preventable.

April 2011

MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus): Between 1995 and 2007, the incidence of MRSA soared 17-fold at Canadian hospitals.

C. Difficile: Ontario has 200 to 300 cases of C. Difficile a month in hospitals, and up to 20 per cent of those patients die, says Ontario's former chief medical officer of health.

VRE (Vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus): For the first time since the introduction of antibiotics, here is a strain of clinically-important bacteria that is resistant to all available antimicrobials – VRE.

Acinetobacter baumannii: This bacteria can survive for months on surfaces and the mortality from the infection is high — ranging as high as 42 per cent for patients in intensive care units.

Superbug outbreaks and hospital occupancy

Health care leaders make a direct connection between hospital overcrowding to superbug outbreaks. Between 1991 and 2003, a period when 16,000 hospital beds were cut in Ontario, the rate of patients contracting C. difficile increased almost fivefold. Outbreaks of other types of hospital-associated infections also rose.

A coroner's inquest into numerous C. difficile deaths in Montreal predicted the death rate could have been halved simply by isolating patients and not allowing them to share bathrooms.

Hospital bed occupancy is at a record level (over 97 per cent) and Ontario has fewer hospital beds per 1,000 of the population than any province. The Ontario government plans to cut another 5,000 acute care beds province-wide. Countries, like the Netherlands, with much lower occupancy rates have correspondingly lower death rates from hospital-acquired infections.

The Netherlands has a bed occupancy rate of 65 per cent; the UK's is 85 per cent and both have correspondingly lower death rates from hospital-acquired infections. In February 2011, there were 770 patients on stretchers in ERs in Ontario hospitals waiting for beds.

Hospital-acquired infection-related deaths are preventable

Death rates from hospital-acquired infections can be decreased by:

- Lowering hospital occupancy rates.
- Doing a deep clean of Ontario's hospitals.
- Providing more resources for cleaning and infection control.
- Ensuring patients do not share bathroom facilities.
- Requiring hospitals to report deaths from hospital-acquired infections.