



The Regulation and
Quality Improvement
Authority

press release

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Health and social care regulator focuses on hospital hygiene

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA), the independent health and social care regulator, today published an overview report highlighting the findings of its hygiene inspections at acute hospitals across Northern Ireland, from March 2008 to September 2009.

Glenn Houston, RQIA Chief Executive, said: **"RQIA has now carried out unannounced inspections at every acute hospital in Northern Ireland. Good environmental hygiene helps prevent infection and results in increased public confidence in our hospitals. The inspection reports show strong performance in certain wards and clinical areas, and varying results in others. The main challenges include issues such as hand hygiene, cleaning of wards and patient equipment. Gaps in staff knowledge of hygiene and infection prevention and control, particularly in the area of decontamination processes is also a concern."**

Mr Houston continued: **"The individual inspection reports, also published today, provide a snapshot of hygiene and infection control practices in thirty wards and clinical areas across eight acute hospitals. We would commend the performance of staff in a number of hospitals where partial or full compliance was achieved, including Antrim, Erne, South Tyrone and Whiteabbey hospitals. However, we have noted the need for considerable improvement in the other hospitals inspected."**

Each trust has provided RQIA with comprehensive action plans, detailing how they are addressing the issues identified within RQIA's inspection reports.

Whilst some issues identified by RQIA may require additional investment to achieve compliance, RQIA believes that many areas can be addressed at no additional cost - but by staff complying with best practice and departmental guidance.

Glenn Houston concluded: "**People who go into hospitals are entitled to expect a clean environment. RQIA's programme of unannounced hygiene inspections is aimed at helping tackle infection and improving the patient experience. We will continue the programme of inspections as we believe that all hospitals can benefit from having an independent assessment of their compliance with the relevant standards. This, in turn, helps to ensure safer care for all those who need to use our hospitals.**"

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For further information:

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Editors' Notes

In January 2008, a package of initiatives aimed at tackling healthcare associated infections was introduced to Northern Ireland, which included a rolling programme of unannounced hygiene inspections. To date RQIA has released 10 inspection reports, which are available at: http://www.rqia.org.uk/publications/rqia_review_reports.cfm. Reports for eight acute hospitals inspected from May to September 2009 are published today:

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

- Royal Victoria Hospital; Musgrave Park; Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

- Antrim Area Hospital; Whiteabbey Hospital

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

- Ulster Hospital

Southern Health and Social Care Trust

- South Tyrone Hospital

Western Health and Social Care Trust

- Erne Hospital

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, established in April 2005 under *The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003*, is the independent health and social care regulatory body for Northern Ireland. In its work RQIA encourages continuous improvement in the quality and availability of health and social care services through a programme of inspections and reviews.