

# Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services Infection Prevention and Control



Audit Report Executive Summary

October 2017

## Who

Alberta Health  
Alberta Health Services

## What

Follow-up performance audit

## When

We conducted our field work in September to December 2016, and substantially completed our audit on June 23, 2017.

## Quick Facts

- The most important ways to prevent the spread of infections are to clean your hands and cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- The Government of Alberta developed and implemented a 10-year Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Strategy.
- The goal of government's IPC strategy is to protect the health of Albertans by preventing the spread of infection, and to assure Albertans of the quality of infection and control by strengthening accountability.

## Learn More

[health.alberta.ca](http://health.alberta.ca)  
[albertahealthservices.ca](http://albertahealthservices.ca)

## Why we did this audit

Infection prevention and control (IPC) is critical for managing the threat of infections acquired in hospitals. The continual increase in micro-organisms resistant to antibiotic medications is a major threat to the health of Albertans. However, effective infection prevention and control strategies and judicious use of antibiotics may help slow the development of new forms of antibiotic-resistant organisms and may even help control the spread of infections. Practices such as proper handwashing and cleaning of medical devices appear simple, yet they are highly effective for preventing the spread of infections.

The Department of Health has overall oversight of IPC, while AHS is responsible for developing and implementing appropriate processes and systems to manage the risk of infections in hospitals.

In 2013 we made recommendations on the following:

- oversight of IPC (department)
- cleaning, disinfecting and sterilizing medical devices (AHS)
- prevention and control of antibiotic-resistant organisms (AHS)
- hand hygiene practices (AHS)

## What we concluded

Both the department and AHS have made significant progress in infection prevention and control by implementing our recommendations. We saw meaningful improvement in key areas.

The department has strengthened its process to oversee implementation of the Infection Prevention and Control Strategy, including better engagement of AHS and professional regulatory bodies.

AHS has strengthened its oversight of hand hygiene practices at hospitals, as well as hospital activities related to cleaning, disinfecting and sterilizing medical devices. AHS has also strengthened its systems for managing risk associated with antibiotic-resistant organisms in hospitals.



## Why this is important to Albertans

Proper hand hygiene and cleaning of medical devices are vital for protecting patients and healthcare workers. Timely screening and treatment of patients with antibiotic-resistant organisms is key for containing the spread of these micro-organisms. Judicious use of antibiotics is critical for preventing microbes from developing resistance to these medications.

## What we examined

In performing the audit we completed the following:

- interviews with management and frontline healthcare workers
- a review of applicable internal and publicly available documentation, data and reports
- visits to a sample of AHS hospitals to perform follow-up audit procedures, which included observation, interviews, examination of IPC documentation, and a review of samples of clinical records

## What we found

### Oversight and accountability for infection prevention and control

The department has implemented this recommendation by documenting responsibilities for itself and each of its partners under the IPC strategy. The department also developed a monitoring process to check compliance with the strategy and has begun publicly reporting on the status of the strategy.

### Hand hygiene practices

AHS has implemented this recommendation by establishing oversight of hand hygiene results at the provincial, zone and hospital levels.

### Cleaning, disinfection and sterilization of medical devices

AHS has implemented this recommendation by developing oversight of MDR results at the provincial and zone levels.

### Prevention and control of antibiotic-resistant organisms

AHS has implemented this recommendation by developing an evidence-informed approach for identifying and managing patients with AROs, standardizing processes for cleaning shared patient equipment, and launching a formal antibiotic stewardship program in hospitals.

## What needs to be done

We have no further recommendations related to infection prevention and control in Alberta hospitals.

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