



## Media Release

Friday November 18, 2011

### Increased MRSA and VRE at STEGH

**St. Thomas, ON** – The St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital (STEGH) through normal monitoring procedures has noted an increase in transmission of VRE and MRSA above normal rates. Following consultation with Elgin St Thomas Public Health (ESPH) Friday afternoon, STEGH declared an outbreak situation on the 2nd surgical floor. These patients are not symptomatic but this bacteria was identified during routine swabs.

“We have very strict monitoring measures in place. On a day-to-day basis we know our transmission rate and immediately act upon any trends,” explains Brenda Lambert, VP Patient Services. “We are declaring this outbreak in part to raise awareness within the organization and the community of the need for diligent hand washing, and following isolation precautions.”

Due to the nature of this outbreak, at this time there is no need to limit visitor access, there will be no disruption of admission to the unit or postponement of surgical procedures. All visitors must wash their hands when entering and exiting the building and when entering and exiting a patient room. Visitors must also follow any isolation precautions posted on a patient door.

MRSA and VRE are increasingly common antibiotic resistant bacteria seen in all communities, hospitals and long-term care environments.

“During consultation with ESPH, they expressed confidence in the control measures we have put in place. We will continue to keep them updated on our progress to decrease transmission,” says Lambert.

Precautions and measures taken at STEGH to prevent the transmission of MRSA and VRE:

- Cleaning and housekeeping support throughout the entire building including terminal cleaning which is an extensive cleaning process that includes removing curtains and furniture from the rooms.
- Emphasized hand hygiene and increased hand hygiene audits
- Notified staff and physicians and requested increased vigilance
- Reviewed standard practices and provided additional education to staff

STEGH routinely swabs all patients (except paediatric patients unless they have recently been in another facility) to determine if they carry MRSA and VRE, because people carrying this bacteria do not show any symptoms. If a patient has recently been in another facility, STEGH puts precautions (gown and glove with contact) until test results are back to determine if they carry the bacteria.

Finding the bacteria does not mean you are sick, but it can be easily spread to more vulnerable people and this is why it is so important to break the chain of transmission. The most effective way to do this is good hand hygiene and preventative measures to protect other patients.

Lambert explains that hand hygiene had been identified on STEGH's Quality Improvement Plan. "Hand hygiene is critical for all staff, patients, and visitors in limiting the spread of MRSA and VRE. We have been making steady gains on this front but we recognize the need to continually reinforce all infection control practices throughout our hospital."

For more information on MRSA or VRE visit [www.elginhealth.ca](http://www.elginhealth.ca).

-30-

**For more information contact:**

Cathy Fox, Communications and Public Relations Specialist  
St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital  
519-631-2030 Ext. 2191, [cfox@stegh.on.ca](mailto:cfox@stegh.on.ca)  
[www.stegh.on.ca](http://www.stegh.on.ca)