



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Consistent, Clearer Language Heart of Province - Wide Patient Safety Initiative Launched Today**

#### **Major Health Care Partners Unite to Support “*Patient Safety is in YOUR Hand*” – Latest Initiative Spearheaded by Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety**

(WINNIPEG, MB—May 22, 2008) A province-wide initiative was launched today to educate and encourage health care providers to communicate medication prescriptions clearly and to eliminate the use of ambiguous medical notations in all documentation, as they can seriously harm patients or cause death if they are misread or misinterpreted.

“Pockets of activity are taking place in various health organizations and jurisdictions on avoiding the use of abbreviations, dose designations and symbols in the medication use system,” said Laurie Thompson, the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety’s Executive Director. “However, this is the first time that so many organizations and jurisdictions have taken such a collective and unified approach to addressing an area that we know can improve patient safety for Manitobans.”

The Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association, the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba, the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Manitoba, and the Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada have all united by contributing expertise and endorsing the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety-led *Patient Safety is in YOUR Hand*. The initiative will expand upon a similar program launched by the Winnipeg Regional Health initiative in 2007.

“Our experience since implementing our campaign in 2007 is that it is leading to a heightened awareness about the impact of ambiguous medical terms, abbreviations and plain bad hand-writing can have on patients,” Dr. Rob Robson, Chief Patient Safety Officer for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority said. “Increasing such awareness can only help strengthen a culture that encourages every provider to take a hand in patient safety.”

Eliminating the use of abbreviations in healthcare settings will reduce errors, reduce patient harm, improve communication, and improve efficiency by reducing the time needed to clarify medical orders.

“Avoiding jargon, abbreviations or other shortcuts is important when it comes to communication involving patients,” Sue Neilson, RN, Executive Director of the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba said. “The potential for misunderstandings leading to mistakes can have serious consequences. Clear, concise documentation is essential to ensuring safe patient care and Manitoba’s registered nurses are pleased to endorse, support and implement this important initiative.”

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#### **PREMIER MEMBERS**



*The Patient Safety is in YOUR Hand* province-wide campaign is aimed at raising awareness and creating dialogue among providers to highlight specific abbreviations, symbols and dose designations that can lead to errors. Thousands of posters reminding practitioners of the dangers of ambiguous abbreviations will be distributed along with pocket sized Do Not Use abbreviation lists. A tool-kit of resources to educate and help inform providers will be on the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety website.

"In spite of the diligence on behalf of all health care providers, ambiguous medical terms and abbreviations have been the cause of many adverse events and "close calls"," Ronald Guse, Registrar of the Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association said. "This initiative will help remove many of the opportunities for mishap, create greater quality in inter-professional communication and enhance patient safety."

The Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association has coordinated a multi-disciplinary educational session for nurses, doctors, and pharmacists in Winnipeg that will be videoconferenced to 18 sites across Manitoba. In addition to encouraging members to support and promote the initiative, the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba, the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Manitoba and the Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association will distribute a pocket sized list of Do Not Use Abbreviations to every one of their members.

"The approach that we use includes ensuring that clients have the right information to manage their own illness and recovery. It is therefore critical that there is good communication between service providers and clients as well as among service providers," said Dawn Bollman, President of the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Manitoba.

The *Patient Safety is in YOUR Hand* initiative will be aimed at hospitals, community practice (physicians, primary care and primary health care, pharmacies), personal care homes, and long term care organizations province wide. The Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety thanks Regional Health Authorities of Manitoba (Silver Level) and Healthcare Insurance Reciprocal of Canada (Bronze level) for sponsoring this important initiative.

Further information, including the campaign posters and Do Not Use list is at [www.mbips.ca](http://www.mbips.ca)

The Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety is an independent non-profit organization created in 2004 to promote, coordinate and facilitate activities that have a positive impact on patient safety throughout Manitoba while enhancing the quality of health care for Manitobans.

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