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NEWS RELEASE

New Resources Launched to Enhance Patient Safety across Province

Winnipeg, Canada – New resources were launched today to help patients and families know what to expect if a critical incident occurs, announced Health Minister Theresa Oswald in partnership with the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety, Regional Health Authorities of Manitoba and the Canadian Patient Safety Institute.

“The safety and well-being of patients are of the utmost concern to and a key responsibility for all health professionals,” said Manitoba Health Minister, Theresa Oswald, confirming the province’s endorsement and implementation of the Canadian Disclosure Guidelines. “Though our primary focus is preventing critical incidents from happening, we want to ensure that if an incident does occur, clear and open communication with patients and families follows as it is key to fostering an environment of openness, trust and transparency in our healthcare system.”

A critical incident, sometimes referred to as an adverse event, occurs when something unexpected happens during the course of patient care that has a serious effect on the patient. Manitoba is one of only three provinces in Canada which has mandated the reporting and investigation of critical incidents in legislation. The law in Manitoba requires the facts and outcomes of critical incidents and actions taken following their identification be shared with patients or their families. The goal of investigating critical incidents is to help the healthcare system learn from them and find ways to prevent them from happening again.

New patient, family and staff education and support resources have been developed by the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety, in partnership with regional health authorities and Manitoba Health and Healthy Living. These resources, including posters and pamphlets, explain the patient’s right to be informed if they are involved in a critical incident and the role of the healthcare system in sharing information.

“These resources stress the importance of sharing information about critical incidents with patients and families and supporting them as they access further healthcare services,” said Laurie Thompson, Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety Executive Director. “We want to encourage healthcare providers to use these resources to guide how they share information and support their patients.”

“Enhancing patient disclosure about critical incidents builds on various patient safety initiatives currently underway across Canada,” said Dr. Chris Hayes, Medical Officer, Canadian Patient Safety Institute. “As we celebrate Canadian Patient Safety Week, the Canadian Patient Safety Institute would like to congratulate Manitoba Health and Healthy Living, the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety and the regional health authorities for taking further steps to improve patient safety and the culture of learning across the healthcare system.”

All eleven regional health authorities, represented by the Regional Health Authorities of Manitoba (RHAM), support patient disclosure and the new education and resource materials.

“Adverse events affect thousands of patients every year in Canada,” said Kathy McPhail, RHAM representative and CEO of Central Regional Health Authority. “These materials support front-line staff and senior healthcare leaders across Manitoba as they share information with their patients. Open and honest communication following a critical incident helps everyone to learn from what happened and what may prevent the same thing from happening again.”

For healthcare providers, the guidelines and resource materials provide a consistent message about sharing information across the province and present clear expectations on what should be done to disclose information and help patients and their families when harm occurs.

“From personal experience, I know that when an adverse event occurs, the relationship of trust and respect that exists between the patient and healthcare provider is changed forever,” said Richard Helston. “We wanted the truth and a heartfelt apology and to know that other people would not have to endure the same grief we did. Timely, truthful and transparent disclosure is a move in the right direction - it can help a Manitoba patient or family achieve a better outcome than we experienced and goes a long way toward re-establishing trust and improving healthcare culture.”

The Canadian Patient Safety Institute launched Canadian Patient Safety Week to strive to ensure every Canadian in need of healthcare can be confident that the care they receive is the safest in the world. Good healthcare starts with good communication. Canadian Patient Safety Week encourages healthcare professionals, patients and their families to ask questions, listen to the answers, and discuss concerns. Canadian Patient Safety Week is November 2-6, 2009. About 90 activities are planned throughout Manitoba during the week and the number of healthcare professionals registered to lead has grown by 600% since last year.

Visit www.asklistentalk.ca to learn how you can become involved.

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