



## **Patient Safety Campaign Launched in Manitoba** *Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety Tells Manitobans: It's Safe to Ask*

January 9, 2007 – WINNIPEG, MB - Asking questions is good for your health and today the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety (MIPS) reinforced that point as it launched *It's Safe to Ask* and a new province-wide public awareness campaign to help improve the safety of health care in Manitoba.

*It's Safe to Ask* encourages all Manitobans, along with their doctors, nurses and pharmacists, to discuss three simple questions:

1. What is my health problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why do I need to do this?

*It's Safe to Ask* has a simple but powerful message that patient safety can be improved when patients understand the answers to these questions. The initiative is being launched province-wide after a successful four-month pilot project at six health sites.

“Research shows that patients and family members often report difficulty in communicating with their doctors and a lack of patient-friendly tools. Increasing patients’ understanding can make health discussions more effective and can contribute to reducing healthcare errors,” said Laurie Thompson, Executive Director of MIPS. “*It's Safe to Ask* uses three key questions to promote an open, trusting relationship where discussions with health providers are encouraged and supported.”

To support the initiative, a brochure is available in 15 languages to assist people with their medical visits. The brochure provides patients with the opportunity to record their health status, additional questions and information received from their health provider. Posters in health settings will remind the public that *It's Safe to Ask*.

*It's Safe to Ask* has been endorsed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba, the Manitoba Medical Association, the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba, the Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association and 11 other organizations (see attached list).

“*It's Safe to Ask* reinforces the concept that maintaining and restoring health is a partnership between you and your health care professional,” said Susan Neilson RN, Executive Director of the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba. “We need to let Manitobans know it is important to ask these questions. To be an active participant in one’s own care, you need to understand the answers to these three key questions.”

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### PREMIER MEMBERS

The public awareness campaign includes a dedicated website [www.safetoask.ca](http://www.safetoask.ca), billboards, transit signage, radio commercials in 6 languages, and ads in 30 newspapers across the province. Brochures and posters are being distributed through Regional Health Authorities and to 35,000 students in Winnipeg School Division 1. Educational material has been provided to 19,000 doctors, nurses and pharmacists to support their important role in this initiative.

“*It’s Safe to Ask* allows patients to become active participants in their own health care,” said Dr. Terry Babick, a family physician practicing in Winnipeg. “It enables patients to discuss health related issues with their physicians and thereby better understand the implications of the treatment plan. It also allows them to become more educated regarding their health issues.”

While the public awareness campaign applies to all Manitobans, the Institute is making a special effort to reach those groups who traditionally have low-health literacy including: new Canadians, those whose first language is not English, seniors, aboriginal peoples and consumers of mental health and disability services.

“I really hope that listening to the patient and answering these three questions become part of the doctor – patient routine for everyone,” said Agnes Gborie, a recent immigrant from Africa. “I know that this is especially important for new immigrants and others with low literacy. It is difficult for people in this group to describe their symptoms and many are afraid to ask questions.”

Funding assistance for *It’s Safe to Ask* has been provided by AstraZeneca, The Winnipeg Foundation, the Canadian Patient Safety Institute and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba.

The Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety is an independent, not-for-profit agency created by the Government of Manitoba in 2004 to promote and coordinate activities that improve patient safety and enhance quality health care for all Manitobans. For more information on *It’s Safe to Ask* and to download materials go to [www.safetoask.ca](http://www.safetoask.ca)  
For more information on the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety go to [www.mbips.ca](http://www.mbips.ca).

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