

October 30, 2002

To: Hospital CEOs and Infection Control Directors

### AGH disclosure creates regional learning opportunity

On October 21, Allegheny General Hospital chose a course of full, open and public disclosure of a patient safety problem involving an increase in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* transmission tied to bronchoscopes. AGH has identified 16 patients who had positive cultures for *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* either before, at, or after bronchoscopy. Ten of 16 bacteria isolated were resistant to tobramycin and gentamycin. One death from necrotizing pneumonia may have been associated with bronchoscopy-acquired *Pseudomonas* infection.

“All existing bronchoscopes at the hospital have been taken out of service, new bronchoscopes have been purchased and an alternative sterilization process has been implemented,” said Richard Shannon, M.D., Chairman of AGH’s Department of Medicine. “We have launched a thorough investigation using all available resources.”

PRHI applauds the AGH leadership and staff who, guided by the desire to do the right thing for patients and caregivers, disclosed problems publicly and are now extending knowledge from its investigation to hospitals throughout the region and the country.

#### Next Steps

Working closely with AGH in its investigation are Bruce Dixon, M.D., Director of the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD), and representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration.

➔ The ACHD is contacting infection control and laboratory directors throughout the county with recommendations for *Pseudomonas* surveillance extending both retrospectively and prospectively. The purpose of this survey will be to determine whether a link exists between such infections and bronchoscopy. ➔

➔ If such a link is established, the ACHD will recommend culturing all bronchoscopes. A positive bronchoscope culture would trigger examination of the sterilization equipment used in their processing.

“Allegheny General has done a great job documenting the circumstances surrounding these infections,” said Dr. Dixon. “But a smaller hospital with fewer cases may not have enough information to know whether a problem exists for them. A survey of all area hospitals will give us more comprehensive information.”

#### Important Meeting

PRHI’s regularly scheduled Infection Control Advisory Committee offers a unique opportunity

for sharing information with infection control practitioners from the entire six-county region.

Dr. Dixon, Dr. Shannon and Cheryl Herbert, AGH’s Director of Infection Control, will be present to discuss what they have learned from their investigation thus far. Dr. Shannon will also share AGH’s procedures for culturing bronchoscopes and sampling sterilization equipment.

#### **PRHI Infection Control Advisory Committee Meeting**

**Tuesday, November 5, 8-10 am**  
**Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh**  
**1400 Locust Street**  
**Building B (Ermire Building)**  
**11th Floor Conference Room, #11053**

#### For Further Information

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