

# Let's be free of VRE: a collaborative approach

Adopting strategies to reduce Vancomycin Resistant Enterococcus (VRE) transmission in patients admitted to the haematology and oncology unit of St George Hospital

## Introduction

VRE blood stream infections (BSIs) are a serious cause of morbidity and mortality leading to significant increases to length of stay and overall costs for immunosuppressed patients.

Previous audits (2010-11) demonstrated VRE positivity in 38 per cent of admissions to wards 4E and 4N. Reduced rates of transmission of VRE results in significant reductions in VRE bacteraemia and its associated morbidity and mortality. "Clean Hands Save Lives" is at the core of the personal patient hygiene packs.

## Key activities

The project team implemented innovative multifocal measures to deal with nosocomial infections. These included increased swabbing, improved cleaning services, cleaning surveillance tools, personal patient hygiene packs and patient questionnaires.

The project has resulted in improved teamwork between the haematology and oncology departments, infectious diseases and infection control departments and the hospitals operations and cleaning services. Questionnaires have allowed patients to provide feedback on the measures implemented and thus better understand their needs.

## Key achievements

A significant reduction in the rate of VRE and BSIs acquired on 4E and 4N has been demonstrated (0.6% of total admissions from previous 3.6%) and in VRE transmission (27.3% to 11.1%). Improvements were also noted through an external cleaning audit.



Collaboration between haematology, infection control and cleaning services has enabled us to implement strategies that will guide future infection control measures to reduce morbidity and mortality, leading to better patient outcomes.

## Acknowledgements

This project was undertaken through a South Eastern Sydney Local Health District Infection Control Enhancement Program grant.

Acknowledgement must be given to the staff of 4E and 4N, cleaning staff and orderlies.

