BCHS announces hepatitis C look-back investigation over – no new cases found

Brantford, ON (December 15, 2014) – After testing nearly 800 patients, the Brant Community Healthcare System (BCHS) is officially ending their hepatitis C look-back investigation. The BCHS found no additional transmissions of hepatitis C other than the two original cases that triggered the investigation. Also, the two patients who originally acquired hepatitis C are doing very well.

“On behalf of the entire organization I would like to again apologize to the two individuals who acquired hepatitis C through endoscopy procedures at the Brantford General Hospital, as well as to all of our patients and families for the inconvenience and worry our investigation may have caused. Your participation in our investigation has been extremely helpful to ensure something like this never happens again,” said Jim Hornell, President & CEO of BCHS. “BCHS has the reputation of being one of the safest hospitals in Canada. We have implemented many practice improvements so that we can continually improve and provide the best care for the communities we serve.”

The overall investigation spanned from January 2014 to September 2014. During this time, BCHS tested nearly 800 patients, temporarily closed the endoscopy suite at the Brantford General Hospital (BGH) to conduct an investigation and audit of procedures, invited Public Health Ontario to conduct an external investigation/review of procedures at BGH, implemented explicit and comprehensive guidelines on the preparation, labeling, delivery, storage, documentation and discarding of all medications used in endoscopy, conducted additional training on sterile techniques for all staff involved in endoscopies, and implemented additional guidelines in the storage of equipment within the procedure rooms. These processes are and will continue to be subjected to regular auditing to ensure adherence.

“We are very appreciative of the support, participation and expert guidance from our fellow organizations, community partners, laboratories and external healthcare providers during this investigation,” says Dr. Tom Szakacs, Infection Control Specialist at BCHS. “Similar breaches have been observed in other hospitals, and we have shared our findings and recommendations to improve patient safety with other healthcare providers.”

“Staff, physicians, volunteers and partner organizations pulled together quickly and effectively to handle this investigation, and I am very proud of our organization for doing so,” added Hornell. “Feedback I have received from our community has been supportive of how we handled a very disturbing situation. We were quick to respond and disclose to ensure patients
were protected. Thank you to our patients for their continued support and trust of our organization – we will always strive to put patients and patient safety first.”

- 30 -