

Abstract Submission – 2006 IAPA Conference & Trade Show

Abstract Title: HCHSA- PROTECTING HEALTH CARE WORKERS FROM INFECTIOUS DISEASES: A SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL

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Issue: HCHSA recognizes that health care organizations face increased challenges post-SARS to ensure they have adequate programs in place to protect the health and safety of their staff. The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care made a number of observations and recommendations in their report “For the Public’s Health: A Plan of Action”. Recommendations include the need to review current practices in occupational health and safety and to identify and disseminate best practices, particularly with respect to the interface between occupational health and infection control.

Project: The authors developed a self-assessment tool to assist health care organizations in identifying strengths and providing opportunities to enhance their occupational health infection control program. With the aid of the assessment tool, an action plan and implementation strategy may include a review and revision of existing occupational health related infection control policies and procedures, an action plan to implement new policies, procedures and programs and identification of infection control training requirements for health care workers. The tool references the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act, Ontario statutes and regulations and Canadian infection control guidelines and standards pertaining to occupational health. The assessment tool is divided into 12 sections. Each section has a number of elements that should be included in an occupational health infection control program. Also included are suggestions and rationale for the implementation of each element. A multidisciplinary approach is recommended for completing the assessment tool. Appropriate managers, staff, the joint health and safety committee and the infection control committee should be involved in the process.

Results: A number of health care professionals, organizations (acute and long-term care), government agencies, associations and unions participated in the review and field test of the assessment tool. Leaders in the hospital sector, long term care and public health endorsed the document. A copy of the tool was sent to all hospital CEOs in Ontario. The document is available as a free download from the HCHSA web-site, www.hchsa.on.ca.

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