

# Proclamation

## NATIONAL INFECTION CONTROL WEEK

Few patients acquire infections (nosocomial infections) as a result of hospitalization but for those who do become infected there can be a prolonged hospital stay and chronic health care problems. Economically, nosocomial infections may cause Canadians as much as a billion dollars annually in terms of the cost of treatment and of the loss of work due to prolonged hospital stay and convalescence. Many nosocomial infections are preventable.

Nurses, doctors and other healthcare workers have long been aware of the problem and of the need for wider application of effective infection control measures. There is a growing realization that spread of infections can be a problem in other community-based institutions such as homes for the elderly and daycare centres.

Scientific evidence has shown that simple infection control measures such as handwashing, when used by everyone, can reduce the spread of infection in healthcare and other institutional facilities. There is reason for optimism that current research will lead to the development of more effective methods of diagnosing, treating, and preventing the spread of infectious diseases. The keys to success are knowledgeable healthcare workers, an informed public, and an awareness that infection control is everyone's business.

To focus public and professional attention on the seriousness of nosocomial and community infections and on the measures which can be taken to reduce them, the Department of National Health and Welfare takes pleasure in endorsing the proposal of Infection Prevention and Control Canada (IPAC Canada) to proclaim the third week of October each year as National Infection Control Week.