

# New CPSP study to track MRSA in urban and rural settings

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), the “super bug,” is affecting Canadian children in their communities and finding its way into hospitals with greater frequency.

“It appears that the incidence of MRSA is increasing and we don’t really have a good idea of the burden of illness,” says Dr. Nicole Le Saux, an infectious disease expert at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario and principal investigator of a new Canadian Paediatric Surveillance Program study on MRSA in hospitalized children.

MRSA can be community-associated (CA-MRSA) or hospital-associated (HA-MRSA), though CA-MRSA affects children much more often than adults.

The CPSP study—which began in September and runs until August 2010—will track the number of hospitalized children with MRSA in referral paediatric hospitals as well as in smaller community hospitals. Dr. Le Saux hopes to identify gaps in the prevention, control and management of the infections in hospital.

“Are children with MRSA infections being put in isolation as soon as they get to the hospital? Do they normally

bathe every day? Do they come from an overcrowded environment? We’re trying to find out where they contracted it,” she explains.

Children probably acquire MRSA organisms from family members who are colonized and asymptomatic, says Dr. Le Saux. “It’s also possible the children are getting MRSA at school, from participation in sports or going on vacation.”

Current data suggests MRSA is more prevalent in urban settings, but Dr. Le Saux thinks Canada’s rural community hospitals will tell a similar story because the infection passes easily in schools, child care and other recreational sports settings.

“In large urban centres, we see MRSA more often. In small centres, paediatricians may not be as aware of it and all the implications of controlling the infection,” says Dr. Le Saux. “This study is a way of making sure the cases in smaller hospitals are reported. It will help us understand if we have a shot at controlling the spread of MRSA.”

For more information on the Canadian Paediatric Surveillance Program, visit [www.cps.ca/cfsp](http://www.cps.ca/cfsp) or e-mail [cfsp@cps.ca](mailto:cfsp@cps.ca).

