



## Clostridium difficile:

### An ongoing challenge for East Lancashire CCG

*Clostridium difficile* is a healthcare-associated infection (HAI) widely associated with exposure to antibiotics.

Whilst the bacteria can live harmlessly in the gut of infants and adult carriers it causes severe diarrhoeal disease in susceptible patients - **typically those with predisposing factors including age, invasive procedures and malignant disease**. In severe cases it can progress to life-threatening complications such as pseudomonas colitis or toxic megacolon. It can be fatal.

Reducing the incidence of *Clostridium difficile* infection is a Domain 5 (5.2ii) objective of the 2014/15 NHS Outcomes Framework - 'treating and caring for people in a safe environment and protecting them from avoidable harm'1. The issue is therefore 'on the radar' for CCGs, particularly with reference to developing antibiotic prescribing policies to restrict the use of broad spectrum antibiotics that may trigger or exacerbate infection 2.

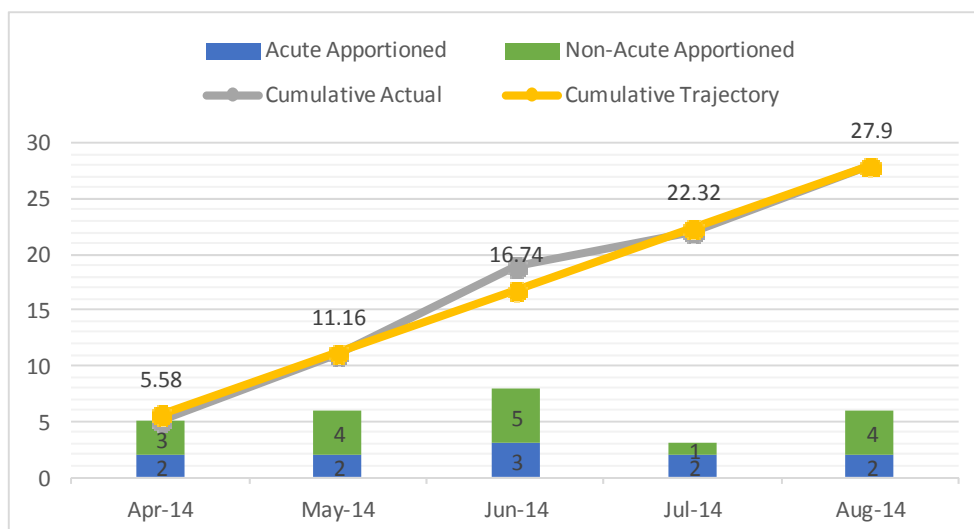
The bacterium typically produces two toxins, A and B, which damage the cells of the colon causing clinically significant diarrhoea and testing should only be performed on patients with at least three diarrhoeal stools in the past 24 hours (unless bowel obstruction is suspected).

### Understanding and reducing Clostridium difficile infection rates

Concerted efforts have been made in the last 5 years to reduce the incidence of Clostridium difficile disease within the population of East Lancashire. Last year, EL CCG succeeded in reporting 58 cases against a trajectory of 82 (29% under trajectory). However, the challenge continues this year with an annual trajectory set at no more than 67 cases. The monthly breakdown of this figure is no more than 5.58 cases per month.

The current position for April to August 2014 indicates that:

- 6 cases of C diff reported in August against monthly trajectory of 5.58
- YTD total number of cases reported for April to August is 28 against a trajectory of 27.9
- Of these cases 14 have been attributed as non-acute and 20 acute cases



Year to date data indicates the CCG is just over trajectory which presents potential challenges ahead for the CCG to maintain within trajectory for the remainder of the year especially in the reduction of non-acute cases.

To support NHS England guidance *Clostridium difficile* infection objectives for 2014-15 a Post Infection Review (PIR) of all cases has been implemented since April and a monthly EL CCG PIR review panel has been established with a collaborative approach to review each CDI case. Lapses in care, lessons learnt, themes and trends are identified and discussed in order to improve the safety of patients. A CDI Alert Card is given to the patient

The majority of cases occur as a result of healthcare intervention whether acute or community i.e. antibiotic prescribing and proton pump inhibitors (PPI), especially in patients with co-morbidities. A review of the cases has indicated that small numbers occur even with appropriate healthcare, but many have chronic underlying medical conditions and are at greater risk of requiring contact with acute providers; indicating that CDI is a whole health economy problem.

Lessons learnt:

- Ensure compliance with Primary Care Antimicrobial Guidance – link to access antibiotic formulary and *Clostridium difficile* infection: best practice in antimicrobial drug prescribing below - <http://www.elmmb.nhs.uk/formularies/antimicrobialpc/>
- Improve triangulation of antimicrobial prescribing i.e. GP, Acute Provider and Dentistry
- Enhance primary care knowledge on how to manage and treat CDI in accordance with '*Clostridium difficile* infection: How to deal with the problem?'

Areas of good practice identified:-

- Positive partnership working and inclusion of providers and GP involvement in the PIR process and review panel
- CDI managed well in many cases
- Good communications between primary and secondary care

**Updated guidance for the management and treatment of CDI**

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/Publications/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionControl/1306CDImanagementrevised/>

**NHS England has published *Clostridium difficile* infection objectives for acute trusts and clinical commissioning groups for the financial year 2014/15**

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/patientsafety/associated-infections/clostridium-difficile/>