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Contacts: David Cowgill
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
Tel: 412 688 6224
Email: David.Cowgill@med.va.gov

**NEW STUDY SHOWS FILTRATION PROTECTS PATIENTS FROM
LEGIONELLA AND OTHER PATHOGENS IN HOSPITAL WATER**

***Dr. Janet Stout, Leading Expert on Waterborne Pathogens, Releases Results at Infection
Control Conference***

Pittsburgh, PA (June 8, 2004) - - As awareness of the dangers of hospital water rise with each new infectious outbreak, Janet Stout, Ph.D., Director of Special Pathogens Laboratory, Veterans Administration (VA) Pittsburgh Healthcare System, will discuss the risks of nosocomial (hospital-acquired) waterborne infections and present the results of a study on the efficacy of point-of-use filtration to eliminate *Legionella* bacteria and other pathogens from water. The study, conducted at the VA Pittsburgh, found that the 0.2-micron Pall-Aquasafe™ Water Filter completely eliminated *Legionella pneumophila* and *Mycobacterium* spp and achieved a greater than 99 percent reduction in heterotrophic bacteria in the water samples. These findings will be presented today at the Association for Professionals in Infection Control & Epidemiology (APIC) Annual Conference.

“Most people have no idea that hospital water can be dangerous, especially to people with compromised immune systems,” says Dr. Stout. “Each year over two million Americans acquire an infection while at a hospital, and tap water is a significant contributor.”

Serious infections of the lung (pneumonia) and blood (bacteremia) can be caused by a host of bacteria, such as *Legionella*, *Pseudomonas*, and fungi, such as *Aspergillus*. These microorganisms can contaminate faucets, taps and showers in hospitals. Although these

organisms are “normal” inhabitants of water systems and do not harm healthy individuals, they can be especially dangerous to patients with compromised immune systems from conditions such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, transplantation and burns as well as for the elderly and newborns. Mortality for hospital-acquired Legionnaires’ disease and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* bacteremia approaches 40 percent.

As a consequence, Dr. Stout’s research focuses on the prevention of these infections by elimination of potential pathogens from hospital water systems. In a recent study, Dr. Stout evaluated one potential preventive method, point-of-use filtration. The study was conducted on the potable water supply of a hospital building that was colonized with *Legionella pneumophila*. Five hundred ninety four (594) water samples were collected from seven faucets in the hospital (four with filters and 3 without) both immediately and after a one-minute flush every two to 3 days for one week. The same cycle was repeated for 12 weeks. The samples were cultured for *Legionella* and other bacteria.

In the U.S., current guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggest that no *Legionella* should be present in hospital units housing transplant patients. In Europe, where they are aggressively managing the problem of nosocomial infections, several countries have already issued directives that 0.2-micron point-of-use water filters are to be used wherever there are immune compromised patients.

Nosocomial infections are increasingly recognized as a primary threat to public health in the U.S. According to the CDC, of the nearly two million patients that acquire an infection while in a hospital, about 90,000 of them die. About one third of these cases are preventable, the CDC reports. The CDC also notes that 23 percent of all Legionnaires disease reported in the U.S. during the 1980s was acquired in hospitals, and of these cases 40 percent died, nearly twice the rate for infections acquired outside the hospital.

About VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

The VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) consists of three divisions: University

Drive, Highland Drive and H.J. Heinz. The VAPHS also has Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) and/or Outpatient Clinics serving the Washington, Westmoreland, and Beaver Counties in Pennsylvania, and a fourth in St. Clairsville, OH. The VAPHS is a tertiary care facility classified as a Clinical Referral Level 3 Facility. It is a teaching hospital, providing a full range of patient care services, with state-of-the-art technology as well as education and research. Comprehensive health care is provided through primary care, tertiary care, and long-term care in areas of medicine, surgery, psychiatry, physical medicine and rehabilitation, neurology, oncology, dentistry, geriatrics, and extended care. The VAPHS is a part of VA Network 4, and serves as the hub for the Western VISN 4 facilities in Altoona, Butler, Clarksburg, and Erie. VISN 4 also has facilities at Coatesville, Lebanon, Philadelphia, Wilkes-Barre, and Wilmington.

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