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## **WGH introduces new technology to support safe medication practices**

Whitehorse – Yukon’s hospitals have further strengthened safe medication practices with the introduction this month of new automated drug dispensing cabinets at Whitehorse General Hospital (WGH).

These high-tech devices now in WGH’s emergency department and inpatient units provide the hospital with an advanced tool that not only securely stores medications, but also offer additional safety measures. With a quick tap of a fingerprint, nurses can access a patient’s profile and select the appropriate medication. The cabinet will then unlock and lights will guide the nurse to the appropriate compartment/bin with medication.

“Medication safety is a significant and on-going priority for our hospitals,” says Clinical Nurse Educator Claire Hills. “As part of this effort, we look at practices and tools that will help us continuously improve. This pharmacy automation technology gives our entire team an extra level of support to ensure we provide safe and excellent hospital care.”

The automated cabinets dispense various types of medication – such as tablets, liquids, injectables and IV solutions. They also work in conjunction with the hospital’s new secure, mobile cart to bring medication directly to the patient’s bedside – which means medications can be administered more quickly and with less room for error.

Automated drug dispensing is quickly becoming the standard in hospitals across Canada. In addition to providing timely and secure access to medication, they can track medication inventory and enable future safety enhancements such as a bar code system for patient verification.

“We’ve already taken a number of steps to enhance safety,” says Yukon Hospitals’ CEO Jason Bilsky. “We’ve reviewed our medication policies and adopted best practices such

as ‘tall man’ lettering to help distinguish sound-alike or look-alike drugs by spelling part of the drug’s name with upper case letters. What’s more, all three hospitals have also introduced ‘smart’ IV pumps with built-in drug information that ensures accurate and safe medication doses.”

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*March is Pharmacist Awareness Month – helping to celebrate and grow awareness about the contributions that pharmacists make in the delivery of health care.*