Olean General Alerts Patients to Possible Insulin Pen Re-use  
*Informational packets sent to approximately 1,900 patients at hospital since 2009*

OLEAN, NY Jan. 24, 2013 – Olean General Hospital announced today that a careful internal review of hospital insulin pen use raised the possibility that their re-use may have occurred with some patients during the period November 2009 to January 16, 2013.

The hospital has not identified a single patient who ever received an insulin injection from another patient’s insulin pen. **Hospital officials also emphasized there is no documentation at this time of the transmission of any blood borne infections during the stay of any patient who received insulin from the pens during this period.**

Nonetheless, hospital officials recommend, as a precautionary measure, that those individuals who received insulin from an insulin pen at Olean General Hospital during the time period be tested for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV. The letter to patients also recommends they be retested for HIV three months after their last insulin pen injection at Olean General Hospital and for hepatitis B and hepatitis C six months after their last insulin pen injection at the hospital.

Olean General Hospital, a member of Upper Allegheny Health System, is mailing letters today to 1,915 patients hospitalized at Olean General since November 2009 who received insulin pen injections while at the hospital.

The hospital, which has 186 beds and approximately 280 nurses, has established a call center – 716-375-7590 or 1-888-980-1220 – staffed from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week. Patients receiving letters are asked to call to coordinate an appointment for testing or to speak with a nurse at the call center if they have questions of any kind. There will be no charge for any screenings, testing, or counseling provided by Olean General Hospital.

Reusable insulin pens have never been used at Bradford Regional Medical Center, also a member of Upper Allegheny Health System and have been removed from use at Olean General Hospital.

“Recent news stories brought to light problems with the inappropriate re-use of insulin pens at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Buffalo,” said Upper Allegheny Health System President and CEO Timothy J. Finan. “This situation prompted Olean General Hospital to initiate its own review and audit of the use of insulin pens at the hospital. Interviews with nursing
staff indicated that the practice of using one patient’s insulin pen for other patients may have occurred on some patients.”

“These pens are used in hospitals across America, and I want to emphasize that we have been unable to identify any specific patients where this occurred and we have no indication of any infections as a result of their use at Olean General Hospital,” he said. “Additionally, the issue here does not involve reuse of insulin pen needles. We are certain that insulin pen needles were not reused because Olean General Hospital has always used special safety needles that cannot be used for more than a single injection. The insulin pen is designed so that it cannot deliver a second dose of insulin with the same needle.”

“We are most apologetic for the inconvenience and concern this matter may cause to our patients,” Finan said.

“The hospital proactively brought these potential concerns to the attention of the New York State Department of Health, and is working with the department as we conduct our review,” Finan said.

“I want to emphasize that we have been unable to identify a single hospitalized patient who ever received an insulin injection from an insulin pen that had been used on another patient,” Finan said. “Regardless, to the extent there may be a chance, however remote, that any patient was provided insulin from an insulin pen other than their own, Olean General Hospital has decided to be proactive and aggressive with respect to notification of our patients. We are very aware that while the risk of infection from insulin pen re-use is extremely small, cross contamination from an insulin pen is possible.”

Insulin pens are devices that contain a reservoir of insulin or an insulin cartridge. They are intended for single person use only, but are designed to provide a patient with multiple insulin injections. The needle on the insulin pen is removable, allowing reuse of the chamber after the insertion of a new sterile needle for each use.

Reports in the media said single insulin pens at the Buffalo Veterans Administration Medical Center were used on multiple patients instead of a single patient. Insulin pens are used at thousands of hospitals across America and also by diabetics at home.

The concern is that a pen’s insulin’s cartridge can potentially become contaminated with biologic material from one patient after an insulin injection. If reused on another patient, it can theoretically transmit infection, even after installation of a new sterile needle, to that patient. The risk of potential infections is considered extremely low, as insulin pens use a small needle with small volume exposure, not involving visible blood and not entering a vessel. Nevertheless, there may be a very small risk that some patients could have been potentially exposed to certain blood borne infections such as hepatitis B virus, (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).
Summary of Actions Taken by Olean General Hospital:

- Initiated an internal audit of the use of insulin pens;
- Reported a concern about potential inappropriate use of insulin pens to the New York State Health Department;
- Sent letter to all hospitalized patients who received insulin pen injections from November 23, 2009 to January 16, 2013;
- Set up a special number for patients to call to coordinate testing or to speak with a nurse if they have questions;
- Discontinued use of insulin pens;
- Reviewed and reinforced all policies and procedures in relation to all insulin injections;
- Notified the media of the potential mis-use of insulin pens.

More About Upper Allegheny Health System

Upper Allegheny Health System hospitals provide care and support to residents of southwestern New York and northwestern Pennsylvania throughout a primary and secondary service area with a population of 180,000. A total of 1,400 individuals are employed by the Upper Allegheny Health System hospitals. In 2008, the Boards of Directors of Bradford Regional Medical Center and Olean General Hospital studied the potential for improving clinical and service performance and business stability through a broad spectrum integration of their respective organizations. Based on this analysis, they concluded that there was an opportunity to create something by the region and for the region. In November 2009, they created the Upper Allegheny Health System (UAHS) as the active parent organization of Bradford Regional Medical Center and Olean General Hospital. UAHS is governed by a Board of Directors of 17 members. These same board members also serve as the Board of Directors for Bradford Regional Medical Center and Olean General Hospital. Upper Allegheny Health System represents a consolidation of governance authorities as possible while still maintaining corporately distinct hospital subsidiaries and valuable local community input. Administratively, key functional areas are consolidated at the parent company to provide support for Bradford Regional Medical Center and Olean General Hospital. These include finance, information technology, human resources, quality improvement, marketing and communications, medical affairs, physician recruitment, supply chain, and planning.

More About Olean General Hospital

The Olean General Hospital campus has been expanding through the generosity of community patrons to accommodate the growing needs of the region. The campus includes 186 patient rooms, together with comprehensive patient, administrative and physician services and accommodations to meet the diagnostic, treatment, administrative and educational needs of its patients and medical staff. OGH is part of Upper Allegheny Health System (UAHS), which includes Bradford Regional Medical Center (BRMC) in Bradford, Pennsylvania, a 107-bed acute care hospital. UAHS provides care to a service area with more than 160,000 individuals in Southwestern New York and Northwestern Pennsylvania. The Olean General Hospital campus consists of the hospital and three additional buildings. The main hospital, located at 515 Main Street in Olean, consists of 186 inpatient beds and comprehensive ancillary and support programs and services. In addition to the main hospital building, the hospital campus includes the Outpatient Surgery Center at 500 Main Street. The Dialysis and Primary Care Center building, located at 623 Main Street on the hospital campus, includes the Gundlah Dental Center, the Marie Lorenz Dialysis Center, the Center for Wound Healing and Hyperbaric Medicine, and physician offices. The final building on the hospital campus is the Louis A. Magnano Olean General Hospital Mercy Flight Center which provides space for Mercy Flight of Western New York helicopters and staff. Off campus facilities include the Mildred Milliman Radiation Medicine Center, a premier affiliate site of Roswell Park Cancer Institute, located at 415 Buffalo Street in Olean. The Mildred Milliman Center includes a linear accelerator, CT simulator, and patient examination and treatment space and physician offices. A hospital facility at 86 South Main Street in Franklinville, New York houses a lab collection station and physician offices. Olean General Hospital also operates a primary care center and laboratory collection station in Salamanca, New York at 4039 Route 219, and a primary care center and dental center in Delevan, New York.