
By Marjory Inglis,
health reporter

TAYSIDE'S UNIQUE store of patient information is being harnessed to help hospitals across Europe fight the spread of infection.

Researchers at Ninewells Hospital in Dundee have just joined an international project funded by the European Union.

The project will look at the impact of hospital-acquired infections, like the

Tayside's lead role in fight against infection

potentially lethal antibiotic-resistant bug MRSA, with a view to being better able to combat the spread of those infections in future.

Professor Peter Davey, an infectious diseases expert at Ninewells, was a key player in establishing the Health Informatics Centre (HIC), a collaboration between NHS

Tayside and Dundee University, that will be involved in the European study.

What makes Tayside attractive to researchers is the unique code that is given to every patient and has been used on every medical record for over 30 years.

The code allows records to be linked and researchers

to track the outcomes for patients of their contacts with the health service but without revealing individual identities.

Professor Davey said, "In this new European study we will be doing work via HIC that is not possible in any of the other countries that are taking part.

"The tough truth nobody is facing up to is that hospital-acquired infection is not going to go away. It has been with us since there were hospitals."