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AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION ON SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTHCARE

UPDATE HIGHLIGHTS

Reducing harm to patients through healthcare associated infection

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care is inviting comment on the recently released draft report *Reducing harm to patients through healthcare associated infection: the role of surveillance*.

Healthcare Associated Infections (HAI) acquired in the hospital setting are a major cause of death and increased morbidity for hospital patients worldwide.

The draft report *Reducing harm to patients through healthcare associated infection: the role of surveillance* has been compiled by 51 experts in infectious diseases from across Australia, and provides up to date scientific and clinical advice on how to reduce HAI by the use of surveillance of processes of care and infection rates of certain micro-organisms, in a variety of settings.

Hospital associated infections are a public concern. It is estimated that there are 200,000 healthcare associated infections in hospitals each year in Australia.

Surveillance systems lead to preventive action. This document focuses on high risk micro-organisms including *Staphylococcus aureus*, multi resistant organisms and *Clostridium difficile*, on high risk infections and on high risk settings such as Intensive Care Units, Neonatal Intensive Care Units in hospital settings and also a focus on residential care facilities.

Reducing harm to patients through healthcare associated infection: the role of surveillance also provides a comprehensive picture of the surveillance of HAI in Australia and demonstrates the costs that these infections impose upon individual Australians and the health system. Each chapter includes recommendations and a summary of key points based on the material presented.

The Commission is now seeking submissions from interested parties on the draft report to ensure that the final strategy is of value to those receiving health services and those working in the field, prior to its presentation to Australian Health Ministers.

The Commission will accept written submissions up to 30 September 2008. For more information please visit www.safetyandquality.gov.au.

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Please feel free to forward this newsletter to others who may be interested in Commission activities. If this newsletter was forwarded to you by someone else and you would like to receive future issues directly, please contact Amy Winter at the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care: (02) 9263 3605 or amy.winter@safetyandquality.gov.au. If you do not wish to receive future issues, please let us know.

Key Healthcare Rights Charter Endorsed for Australia by Health Ministers

The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights was developed after wide consultation by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care and specifies the key rights of patients and consumers when seeking or receiving healthcare services.

It summarises the basic rights that patients and consumers are entitled to receive when accessing health care services throughout Australia. These rights are Access, Safety, Respect, Communication, Participation, Privacy and Comment.

The Charter will become the reference point for healthcare organisations which will use the Charter as the basis for informing patients and consumers of their rights. The Commission will support inclusion of the Charter into accreditation systems and educational curricula to ensure it becomes an important part of the healthcare system in Australia.

Australian Health Ministers adopted the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights at their meeting in July 2008.

AUSTRALIAN CHARTER OF HEALTHCARE RIGHTS

The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights describes the rights of patients and other people using the Australian health system. These rights are essential to make sure that, wherever and whenever care is provided, it is of high quality and is safe.

The Charter recognises that people receiving care and people providing care all have important parts to play in achieving healthcare rights. The Charter allows patients, consumers, families, carers and services providing health care to share an understanding of the rights of people receiving health care. This helps everyone to work together towards a safe and high quality health system. A genuine partnership between patients, consumers and providers is important so that everyone achieves the best possible outcomes.

Guiding Principles

These three principles describe how this Charter applies in the Australian health system.

1 Everyone has the right to be able to access health care and this right is essential for the Charter to be meaningful.

2 The Australian Government commits to international agreements about human rights which recognise everyone's right to have the highest possible standard of physical and mental health.

3 Australia is a society made up of people with different cultures and ways of life, and the Charter acknowledges and respects these differences.



For further information please visit www.safetyandquality.gov.au

**AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION ON
SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTHCARE**

What can I expect from the Australian health system?

MY RIGHTS	WHAT THIS MEANS
Access I have a right to health care.	I can access services to address my healthcare needs.
Safety I have a right to receive safe and high quality care.	I receive safe and high quality health services, provided with professional care, skill and competence.
Respect I have a right to be shown respect, dignity and consideration.	The care provided shows respect to me and my culture, beliefs, values and personal characteristics.
Communication I have a right to be informed about services, treatment, options and costs in a clear and open way.	I receive open, timely and appropriate communication about my health care in a way I can understand.
Participation I have a right to be included in decisions and choices about my care.	I may join in making decisions and choices about my care and about health service planning.
Privacy I have a right to privacy and confidentiality of my personal information.	My personal privacy is maintained and proper handling of my personal health and other information is assured.
Comment I have a right to comment on my care and to have my concerns addressed.	I can comment on or complain about my care and have my concerns dealt with properly and promptly.

Patients at Risk

The characteristics of patients in Australia and internationally are changing. Acute care hospitals now have an increasing proportion of patients with complex problems who are more likely to be or become seriously ill during their hospital stay. Warning signs often precede serious adverse events such as cardiac arrest, unplanned admission to intensive care, and unexpected death. However, there is consistent evidence that these warning signs are not always identified; and if they are, they may not prompt necessary actions.

Ensuring that patients at risk of critical illness or a serious adverse event receive appropriate and timely care is a key safety and quality challenge. All patients at risk should receive appropriate and timely care irrespective of their location in the hospital or the time of day. However survival rates from cardiac arrest are lower on weekends and at night, and mortality rates of patients admitted to intensive care from general wards are higher than those admitted from emergency departments or operating theatres, suggesting that these patients are not receiving optimal care prior to their admission.

This situation has been known for some time, and there has been considerable work done over almost 20 years to improve the care that patients at risk receive. Nonetheless, problems remain. These problems are visible in the media reports that appear when individuals die unexpectedly in hospitals, reports of serious and sentinel events, and research showing the continuing occurrence of avoidable cardiac arrests. Even though systems have been introduced to better manage patients at risk, this area needs to remain a priority while patients continue to experience preventable adverse events because their deterioration is not identified or managed properly.

This program is the Commission's response to these issues. A review of the literature and interviews with key informants identified three key areas where the Commission could use its position as a national leader in safety in quality in Australia to advance this area of work. The three initiatives in this program take into account the Commission's role, issues that are of particular importance in Australia, and where there has been limited work done nationally or internationally. The three initiatives in this program are:

- development of a standardised observation chart that supports recognition of deterioration and prompts action
- development of minimum standards for rapid response systems, looking particularly at the needs of suburban, rural and remote areas
- examination of the way which concepts arising from the work on patients at risk may apply in primary care.

The Commission will commence work on Initiative 1: Development of a standardised observation chart by convening a National Innovation Workshop to bring together researchers and practitioners working on observation charts or related activities to share information and generate ideas. This Workshop will be an opportunity to learn about what else is happening in Australia in this field and to contribute to the Commission's national program of work.

The Workshop will be held in Sydney on Friday 14 November 2008. The venue and times for the workshop will be advised in late September 2008. For more information and to register your interest to attend the workshop please visit www.safetyandquality.gov.au.

Reducing blood clot risk for patients

A new national program to stop potentially lethal blood clots developing in private hospital patients was launched in Canberra on 28 May 2008 by the Hon. Nicola Roxon, Minister for Health and Ageing.

Titled *Stop the Clot*, the program is funded by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care to improve the assessment and management of VTE (blood clot) risk in hospitalised patients.

The program was developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council's National Institute of Clinical Studies (NICS) and successfully implemented in over 40 public hospitals nationally. NICS is being funded by the Commission to work with the private hospital sector and reduce the incidence of blood clots.

In launching the new private hospital VTE prevention program, Minister Roxon stressed the urgent need to manage better high risk patients in a bid to cut the VTE toll.

The program forms part of the Commission's Medication Safety Priority Program. Improving the assessment and management of VTE risk in hospitals is a key priority of the Commission, and it is important that the program's benefits be extended to the large number of hospitalised patients in the private sector.

Hospitals participating in the *Stop the Clot* program are supported by NICS to identify the key issues that need to be addressed within their own environment to integrate systematically best practice guideline recommendations into routine hospital care procedures. They are also given extensive resources to aid behavioural change and raise awareness amongst staff and patients.

Commissioner update

In July we were saddened by the death of Dr Christopher Newell. Dr Newell brought valuable insight to the Commission on consumer issues, and his views and input are already missed.

An explicit consumer point of view in issues relating to safety and quality in health care is important for the Commission to ensure that consumer interests are appropriately represented. The Commission recently invited Expressions of Interest for a Consumer Commissioner.

The primary role of the Consumer Commissioner will be to bring a background and knowledge of safety and quality in health care from a consumer perspective.

Applications for this position close on 8 September 2008. For further information please visit our website www.safetyandquality.gov.au.

The Commission also recently welcomed a new Commissioner - Mr Mick Reid, Director-General of Queensland Health.

Mr Reid has had many years of experience in both the public and private sectors. For five years until 2002 he held the position as Director General of NSW Health.

In 2006 he was appointed as Director General of the Ministry for Science and Medical Research in New South Wales with responsibility for planning and coordinating science, innovation and medical research in the State.

In January 2008 he took up the position as Chief of Staff to the Federal Minister for Health, Nicola Roxon primarily to initiate national health reform.

He was appointed Director-General Queensland Health in June 2008.

Some of the places you may have seen us over the last four months

During the last 4 months Professor Baggoley, Chief Executive of the Commission, has presented at a number of conferences and events. These have included:

May

Coalition of National Nursing Organisations Meeting, Sydney

VTE Summit, Sydney

Health Complaints Commissioners Meeting, Adelaide

June

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre Grand Round, Melbourne

St George Hospital Medical Grand Round, Sydney

Australian Day Surgery Council Meeting, Sydney

Queensland Health Patient Safety Symposium, Brisbane

July

Uniting Care Board, Brisbane

Communicable Diseases Network of Australia meeting, Melbourne

August

National Medical Boards Conference, Brisbane

We will also be presenting at the 6th Australasian Conference on Safety and Quality in Health Care, "Bold Aims – Bold Outcomes" on 1 - 3 September 2008 and the The National Forum on Safety and Quality in Health Care, "Safety and Quality is Everyone's Business" on 29 - 31 October 2008.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Launch of a 'new look' for Commission website

The Commission recently launched its 'new look' website: www.safetyandquality.gov.au.

The updated layout for the site aims to provide easier access to information; has program specific pages; and includes an A-Z document search option.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. The header features the organization's name and a map of Australia. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for Home, About Us, Media & Presentations, Programs, Publications, Tenders, and Contact Us. The main content area is titled "Welcome to our website." and includes a search bar, a list of quick links, and a list of latest news. The quick links include Commissioners and Committees, Call for Evidence Guidelines, Knowledge Centre, National Patient Medication Chart, and Related News. The latest news section features a headline about the Australian Health Ministers' endorsement of the Australian Code of Healthcare Ethics and a link to a consultation on the development of a Consumer Engagement Strategy for the Commission. The footer includes the date "Updated: 11 August, 2008" and a "top of page" link.