MEDIA RELEASE

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"Clinical Handover: Critical Communication" –
Release of a supplement issue in the Medical Journal of Australia

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) is pleased to announce the publication of a supplement issue in the Medical Journal of Australia on Clinical Handover. This supplement issue, Clinical Handover: Critical Communication, contains eleven articles authored by pilot studies funded by ACSQHC, along with an article contributed by the Victoria Quality Council. Clinical Handover: Critical Communication is available on the Medical Journal of Australia's website at www.mja.com.au.

Together, these articles represent a substantial contribution to the evidence-base on clinical handover both nationally and internationally. Through the National Clinical Handover Initiative, ACSQHC remains committed to strengthening the knowledge, evidence-base and availability of practical tools for improving clinical handover.

Accurate and consistent handover is critical to ensuring safe patient care. Clinical handover is an integral part of the patient journey. Many staff are required to provide care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Patients are transferred from home to hospitals and within the community. Within hospitals, patients move between wards and diagnostic units (such as X-ray) and therapeutic units such as dialysis or the operating theatre. A number of different disciplines may be involved including physiotherapy and social work. The communicative work in health care is intense. Poor quality handover, or the omission of handover, can result in the duplication of tests, delays in treatment or administration of the wrong medication. The consequences for patients can be extremely serious. ACSQHC’s National Clinical Handover Initiative was established to create practical tools and solutions for improving handover. Several tools and solutions have been developed, including:

- a draft national guide to clinical handover improvement - the OSSIE Guide;
- six hours of clinical handover online education;
- protocols for bedside nursing and whiteboard handover;
- materials on using the iSoBAR dataset for handover, which is highly transferable and adaptable to local context;
- a transfer-to-hospital 'Yellow Envelope' from aged care facilities, including minimum data requirements and implementation process;
- protocols for nursing and medical shift-to-shift handover, including staff engagement strategies, content requirements and discipline-specific training materials; and
- a tool kit developed to enable clinicians to observe their own handover practices using video technology to reflect and redesign those practices.
The results of these improvements projects include:

- reduced staff stress, as they no longer have to make extra phone calls or check notes to find crucial pieces of information
- improvement in patient satisfaction and in their perception of the quality of teamwork among clinical staff
- safer handover in 30 hospitals in 6 states and other care settings

More tools to assist clinicians to make handover safe will be available by early September 2009. For more information visit our website at www.safetyandquality.gov.au.

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