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AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION ON SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTH CARE

WEDNESDAY 19 MARCH

- [Health literacy in Australia](#)
- [Training and competencies for recognising and responding to clinical deterioration](#)
- [Professor John Turnidge appointed to lead program for national surveillance of antimicrobial resistance and antibiotic usage](#)
- [Improving safety and providing high quality care for people with cognitive impairment in hospitals](#)
- [Australian Open Disclosure Framework endorsed by health ministers](#)
- [Consultation on the Draft National Consensus Statement on End-of-Life Care in Acute Hospitals](#)

Health literacy in Australia

Having consumers who are partners in the processes of their health and health care is necessary for safe and high quality health care.

Health literacy plays an important role in enabling effective partnerships. In order for partnerships to work, everyone involved needs to be able to give and receive, interpret and act on information such as treatment options and plans.

The Commission has been working on a new resource about health literacy. The paper, *Health Literacy: Taking Action to Improve Safety and Quality*, provides a broad overview of health literacy in Australia and identifies ways of improving health literacy across the country.

The paper, and a new national statement on health literacy, will be released later this year.

For more information email: healthliteracy@safetyandquality.gov.au

[Back to top](#)

Training and competencies for recognising and responding to clinical deterioration

The National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards include Standard 9: Recognising and Responding to Clinical Deterioration in Acute Health Care. Its intent is to ensure that a patient whose condition is deteriorating is recognised promptly, and appropriate action is taken.

NSQHS Standard 9 requires that the 'clinical workforce is trained and proficient in basic life support' (action 9.6.1.)

During 2013, the Commission received feedback which included questions regarding which clinicians require training in basic life support and whether training in basic life support ensured adequate competency in the skills required to recognise, escalate and respond to clinical deterioration.

Based on this feedback, the Commission will be conducting a consultation process to seek advice about the core common competencies and training requirements for recognising and responding to clinical deterioration, particularly with regard to the requirements of the NSQHS Standards.

For more information email: rrconsultation@safetyandquality.gov.au

[Back to top](#)

Professor John Turnidge appointed to lead program for national surveillance of antimicrobial resistance and antibiotic usage

The Commission recently appointed Professor John Turnidge as a Senior Medical Advisor to lead work on a national surveillance program for antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and antibiotic usage (AU).

The Commission will be coordinating national action to prevent and contain antimicrobial resistance through enhanced surveillance systems.

Professor Turnidge has provided leadership to many high-profile professional societies and committees both nationally and internationally dealing with the issue of antibiotic resistance and its management. He will provide expert medical advice and leadership for the program.

[More details on Professor Turnidge's appointment and the national surveillance program for AMR and AU.](#)

[Back to top](#)

Improving safety and providing high quality care for people with cognitive impairment in hospitals

In 2013, the Department of Social Services, (formerly within the Department of Health and Ageing) funded the Commission to use the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards, and other potential mechanisms, to provide the basis for coordinating national improvements in the care of patients with cognitive impairment in acute care.

During the first phase of the project, the Commission drafted and widely consulted on a handbook to guide services. The consultation included national forums and focus groups with service providers, an online survey and submissions.

The consultation confirmed staff education is crucial for highlighting the importance of recognising and responding to cognitive impairment (including delirium). Staff education is also important for making staff aware they can make a difference to patient outcomes in the way they provide care. Consumer feedback highlighted areas for improvement including treating patients with respect and dignity, engaging carers and providing additional patient support. The use of sedation as the first management response was raised frequently as an issue by service providers and consumers, highlighting the importance of training in non-pharmacological approaches.

Overall, the feedback from the consultation was positive with general agreement with the strategies proposed in the handbook. However, the consultation also confirmed that the links between the recommended strategies in the handbook and the existing NSQHS Standards are not specific enough in their current format to direct health services to implement the key recommended strategies.

The next phase of the project will:

1. Produce electronic versions of the handbook to target the three audiences of consumers, clinicians and service managers, and

2. Inform the Commission's work to address the identified safety and quality gaps including consideration of a clinical care standard for delirium and identifying key cognitive impairment items and strategies to be considered for incorporation into the broader review process of the NSQHS Standards.

[More information on the Improving the Management of Cognitive Impairment project.](#)

[Back to top](#)

Australian Open Disclosure Framework endorsed by health ministers

The Australian Open Disclosure Framework, has been formally endorsed by the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Committee, as well as key clinical organisations including:

- Australian College of Nursing
- Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- Royal Australian and New Zealand Colleges of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians
- Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
- Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia
- Australasian College of Emergency Medicine, and
- Royal College of Pathologists of Australia.

The Framework is accompanied by a suite of implementation materials and resources aimed at consumers, clinicians and health service organisations.

The Framework replaces the former Open Disclosure Standard which was released in 2003 and was the first nation-wide open disclosure policy in the world.



[More information on the Australian Open Disclosure Framework and available resources.](#)

[Back to top](#)

Consultation on the Draft National Consensus Statement on End-of-Life Care in Acute Hospitals

As part of its work on improving the safety and quality of end-of-life care in acute hospitals, the Commission has developed the Draft National Consensus Statement: Essential Elements for Safe and High-Quality End-of-Life Care in Acute Hospitals (the Consensus Statement).

[Download the Draft National Consensus Statement Essential Elements for Safe and High-Quality End-of-Life Care in Acute Hospitals](#)

The draft Consensus Statement aims to provide guidance for health services to develop their own systems for delivering safe, timely and high quality end-of-life care in a way that is tailored to their population, resources and available personnel, whilst being in line with relevant jurisdictional or other programs.

The Commission is holding an open consultation on the draft Consensus Statement until 31 March 2014.

[Full details on the consultation process.](#)

[Back to top](#)

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