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Leading intensive care specialist to play pivotal role in Australia's health care safety and quality

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) has announced the appointment of Dr. Robert Herkes as its new Clinical Director. This important role provides expert clinical advice across all of the Commission's nationally coordinated health care safety and quality priority programs.

Dr. Herkes was previously the Director of Intensive Care Services at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney, State Medical Director of the NSW Organ and Tissue Donation Service, and Chair of the NSW Critical Care Taskforce.

The Commission's Chief Executive Officer, Professor Debora Picone, said "Dr. Herkes is a highly experienced clinician with a long-standing interest in health system improvement."

"The improvements that Dr. Herkes has championed in NSW, have significantly improved patient safety and saved countless lives. It's a privilege to have him working for us and we look forward to being able to take his extensive clinical expertise to affect safety and quality across Australia", Professor Picone added.

Dr. Robert Herkes

While under Dr. Herkes' leadership, the NSW Critical Care Taskforce developed and implemented a statewide Extra-Corporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO) service to allow the safe transport of patients with severe respiratory failure from rural and regional hospitals to Sydney. This service was used extensively during the Swine Flu Pandemic to rescue patients who were unsupportable with conventional ventilation.

While the State Medical Director of the NSW Organ and Tissue Donation Service, significant improvements in the process and rates of Organ Donation occurred. This was partly due to the development and implementation of clinician education in donation conversation with relatives, and reframing the importance of donation to Intensive Care Staff.

While the Director of Intensive Care Service at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Dr Herkes was involved with the design and implementation of a Clinical Emergency Response System (CERS)

which emphasises the importance of a patient's admitting team in diagnosing and treating deterioration of their patients.

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care

The Commission is a government agency that leads and coordinates national improvements in safety and quality in health care across Australia. The Commission aims to support health care professionals, organisations and policy makers who work with patients and carers.

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