

AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION ON SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTH CARE

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Fit for surgery – the National Patient Blood Management Collaborative

Evidence-based management of anaemia and iron deficiency before surgery greatly improves patient care, an innovative project led by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care has shown.

The project, which has representation from 12 health services and is known as the National Patient Blood Management Collaborative (the Collaborative), aimed to increase the number of patients who had their haemoglobin and iron stores optimised before elective surgery.

The Collaborative resulted in a marked improvement in the management of iron deficiency and anaemia across the health services involved. Of the 12,648 patient records documented during the Collaborative, assessment rates for iron deficiency more than doubled for each surgical specialty.

Patients who are anaemic or iron deficient at the time of surgery may have an increased risk of having a blood transfusion. While blood transfusions are an important element of high-quality care, assessing patients beforehand in line with the available evidence is an important step in ensuring good outcomes and minimising risks.

The Collaborative focused on anaemia management for patients having selected elective gastrointestinal, gynaecological and orthopaedic surgical procedures. It was formed to support best practice in patient blood management in public and private hospitals across Australia, and to encourage the effective assessment and management of anemia and iron deficiency before elective surgery to reduce unnecessary blood transfusions.

The Collaborative also developed improved processes and new resources to enhance patient blood management (PBM), which is the management and preservation of a patient's own blood to minimise blood loss during surgery, and optimise patient tolerance of anaemia.

Professor Villis Marshall, Chair of the Commission's Board, said: 'Being part of the Collaborative enabled knowledge-sharing among the health services and access to high-level clinical guidance from recognised PBM experts. Participants also shared the resources they developed, which are now available to all health services to support improved blood management practices.'

The Commission's CEO, Adjunct Professor Debora Picone AM, said: 'Every story from the Collaborative is a great improvement for patients, with changes largely initiated by clinicians. Recognition also goes to the Nurse Coordinator at each hospital who drove clinical change in this important quality improvement process.'

Knowledge-sharing at the Collaborative also demonstrated that a coordinated approach between health service executives, lead clinicians and general practitioners who care for patients before and after surgery is essential to improve evidence-based care.

The 12 health services participating in the Collaborative were:

- The Canberra Hospital, ACT
- Gosford and Wyong Hospitals, NSW
- Lismore Base Hospital and St Vincent's Private Hospital, NSW
- Cairns Hospital, Queensland
- Prince of Wales Hospital and the Royal Hospital for Women, NSW
- Royal Darwin Hospital, NT
- Alfred Hospital, Victoria
- Northern Health, Victoria
- Joondalup Health Campus, WA
- St Vincent's Private Hospital, Sydney
- Lyell McEwin Hospital and the Women & Children's Health Network, SA
- The Mater Hospital, Sydney, NSW

An event to showcase the results of the Collaborative took place in Sydney on Friday 2 June.

Resources have been developed showcasing the outcomes from the Collaborative, and will be available online. For more information, visit <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/national-priorities/pbm-collaborative/latest-news/>.

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Media enquiries

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About the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care

The Commission's role is to lead and coordinate national improvements in the safety and quality of health care. The Commission works in partnership with patients, carers, clinicians, managers, policymakers and healthcare organisations to achieve a sustainable, safe and high-quality health system. Key functions of the Commission include developing national safety and quality standards, developing clinical care standards to improve the implementation of evidence-based health care, coordinating work in specific areas to improve outcomes for patients, and providing information, publications and resources about safety and quality.