



February 2010  
Issue no. 38

# Quality Matters

The monthly newsletter of Hunter New England Health Clinical Governance

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Editorial team:  
Dr Kim Hill,  
Professor Anne  
Duggan,  
Ms Barbara March,  
Ms Tracey Currie  
and Ms Karen  
Mackaway

Comments and  
queries welcome:  
clinicalgovernance@  
hnehealth.nsw.gov.au

## From the Director...

With the 2010 clinical year already well underway, a key quality and safety priority has been the implementation of the state-wide Between the Flags Program, to improve systems for detecting the deteriorating patient.

Many staff have worked hard to get the new observation charts into place, and to access the awareness training packages, and this is warmly acknowledged. Special thanks are extended to the Project Team members, who continue to



be great advocates and enthusiastic implementers of Between the Flags, on behalf of all of HNE Health.

Our thanks also go to Elizabeth Grist for this month's Guest Editorial. During the busy January 2010 period, Liz's advice and feedback from the new graduates was welcome news to us all, as was their obvious interest in the Between the Flags initiative.

**Dr Kim Hill**  
*Director, Clinical Governance*

### Guest Editorial – Partnerships in Hunter New England Health

*By Elizabeth Grist, Nurse Manager, Specialist Mental Health Service for Older People Mental Health Services, Hunter New England Health Service*

In January 2010, I had the opportunity to relieve in the Director of Nursing and Midwifery Role whilst Chris Kewley was on a well deserved holiday. During this time I gained an even greater understanding of how HNE Clinical Governance was structured and worked.

It was very beneficial and informative being involved with Clinical Governance whilst in my acting role. It was also extremely helpful having the Director Clinical Governance in the office next to mine. Kim gave me an even greater insight into Clinical Governance. My personal view has always been that Clinical Governance must underpin all our practice and it was great to see that HNE Health has a really practical and well functioning structure to ensure this. It was clear that Clinical Governance was there to help, support, improve and guide practice, and in really practical ways.

When I returned to my usual role in Mental Health, I coordinated the New Graduate Registered Nurse Orientation Program. Whilst in Chris's role, I had taken the opportunity to invite Dr Anne Duggan to speak to the graduates regarding Clinical Governance, and in particular, the "Between the Flags Program". Feedback from the graduates was very enthusiastic and positive. I also asked the new graduates what their understanding of Clinical Governance was. It was pleasing to hear comments such as, "it guides what we do", "it's the theory that underpins what clinical people do" and "it is ethics and monitoring what we do". I was very impressed at the level of understanding that the new graduates had.

My interactions with Clinical Governance were positive and I would encourage staff and managers who would like to gain greater understanding of Clinical Governance and related matters or who would like to work on common areas of interest to make contact with other colleagues from this Department.

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### Recognising Excellence

Applications for the 2010 HNE Health Quality Awards open on Monday 8 March 2010. Entries close on Friday 14 May 2010. HNEH Quality Awards are the internal filter to the NSW Health Awards. For more information go the Quality Awards and Recognition web page at:  
<http://intranet.hne.health.nsw.gov.au/cg/Quality/Awards>



## **This Month's Update is on... A Review of QUALITY MATTERS**

The Quality Matters Newsletter is the monthly newsletter of Hunter New England Health Clinical Governance and was first published in January 2007. It is designed to provide snapshots of initiatives, themes and events in quality and safety within Hunter New England Health, and in NSW, Australia and internationally. The newsletter has evolved in format, content and circulation over three years to become an instrument of mass communication about issues in clinical quality, safety and clinical governance. Regular features in the newsletter include:

- Guest Editorials contributed by a variety of staff from HNE Health and further afield
- Staff Profiles and Updates on key initiatives
- Safety Alerts and Notices
- Root Cause Analysis lessons learned

Circulation of the newsletter is by e-mail, supported by printing out of copies for those staff not on e-mail. The newsletter is researched and edited by a small editorial committee which this year includes Dr Kim Hill, Professor Anne Duggan, Barbara March and Tracey Currie. Under the guidance of this enthusiastic team, *Quality Matters* continues in a restructured format throughout 2010, with a new section titled "Update on..." designed to keep readers abreast of current quality and safety initiatives in HNE Health.

Quality Matters is distributed at the end of the month via e-mail and goes to over 10,000 email addresses across HNE Health. Monthly statistics are kept, and show that around 45% of those emails sent are opened by recipients.

In reviewing three years of newsletters, it is evident that Quality Matters contains information which is extremely important to all staff of Hunter New England Area Health Service providing links and further points of information about a variety of topics related to Patient Safety and quality. Comments and enquiries about *Quality Matters* are welcome at email: [clinical\\_governance@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au](mailto:clinical_governance@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au)

## **Root Cause Analysis Review**

Every day of the week at any hour patients present to Emergency Departments throughout the Area, and in some cases, a doctor may not be immediately present on site. In these circumstances, HNE Health has clear guidelines for the clinical team regarding clinical communication, and nursing staff skills in assessment and communication are paramount to the patient receiving appropriate treatment or to decisions about transfer for further care.

A recent root cause analysis (RCA) highlighted the situation that arose following a patient's discharge from an Emergency Department having not seen a medical officer. The case involved incomplete documentation in the patient's medical record, of the patient's clinical condition and of telephone discussions held with the doctor.

This case highlighted the importance of a comprehensive record of the patient's history, assessment and plans, conversations with other clinicians, evaluation including responses to treatment, discharge details and clinical observations. When relaying the patient's history, it is essential that the relevant details which will guide the doctor in prescribing the appropriate treatment are included. Complete documentation of assessment and details of conversations with remotely located medical staff is also routinely required. It is so much better to refer to already documented care than to rely on fading memories of an incident months down the track. Related to this, the RCA team recommended all staff be trained in the use of ISBAR as a communication tool.

Another highlighted issue of this RCA was that a Coroner's Checklist was not completed. At the time of death there was conjecture as to whether referral to the Coroner should be made. This eventually occurred 24 hours later. Within HNE Health, all deaths require the HNE Health Coroner's Checklist to be completed and this document then becomes part of the patient medical record.

## **Clinical Unit in Ethics and Health Law Seminars**

The seminars are held monthly on a Monday evening in the Royal Newcastle Centre, Seminar Room at 6.00 pm for supper, seminar to begin at 6.30pm. All are welcome, no entry fee, no RSVP necessary.

### *Seminar Dates for 2010:*

12 April 2010  
3 May 2010  
7 June 2010  
5 July 2010  
2 August 2010  
6 September 2010  
11 October 2010  
1 November 2010  
8 December 2010

## **WHO Operating Theatre Checklists**

The WHO has issued guidelines about the introduction of Operating Theatre checklists. The timeline for these to be in place throughout Australia, as advised by the Federal Minister of Health with full backing of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, is by mid 2011. In HNE Health, a pilot study in one hospital will commence shortly, with more planned. A full consultation with stakeholders in theatres is being planned to address local requirements.

A copy of the draft checklist is available at [http://www.who.int/patientsafety/information\\_centre/documents/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/patientsafety/information_centre/documents/en/index.html) For more information contact Dr John Fisher, Associate Director, Clinical Governance on 0429 100422.

## **Human Factors Conference**

The Ninth International Symposium of the Australian Aviation Psychology Association, Healthcare Human Factors Seminars will be held on Wednesday 21st April 2010. For registrations, visit <http://www.aavasymposium.org/register.html>