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Quality Matters

The monthly newsletter of Hunter New England Health Clinical Governance

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From the Director...

Welcome to the first edition of *Quality Matters* for 2008.

Our focus this month is on the work commencing around clinical communication, which is one of the most important components of effective clinical service delivery.

Also in this edition, information about the roll-out of the HNE Health Clinical Ethics program is outlined, and this program will be one of the major ongoing developments in 2008.

Last year we held the inaugural Clinical Governance Christmas Quiz, and I would like to congratulate the winners, who are listed in this edition.

I would also like to thank all of



you who entered. We received more than a 100 entries, and with such a terrific response, it is planned to hold the quiz next year, as one of our annual events.

From time to time we receive feedback on the newsletter, and this is always appreciated.

Previous feedback has been so useful that we have decided to obtain more information about preferred topics and current format through a wider reader's survey, which will be sent to you next month.

I hope that you will find a few minutes to complete it and send it back - I can assure you that we will use the information provided to enhance *Quality Matters*.

Best wishes for a happy and prosperous 2008.

Dr Kim Hill
Director
Clinical Governance

Improving the quality of health services

By Dr John Fisher

In October recently, I was fortunate to be able to attend an international course on 'Improving The Quality of Health Services' held by the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston, Massachusetts USA, itself regarded as a world leader in this field.

This intensive course, held over a fortnight, was attended by 26, mostly medical graduates, but included several nurses. Thirteen developing countries were represented.

The Harvard School of Public Health is a graduate school of the Harvard University along with the Harvard Medical School. It dates from 1911 and has an endowment fund of about US\$1-Billion, being 3.36% of Harvard University's total endowment! The School of Public Health employs a Faculty of 378, together with 616 researchers and 689 support staff.

Its focus is on population rather than the individual, with a public

service ethic and an emphasis on disease prevention and health promotion for the community. Milestones include:

- 1) Major research and discovery related to HIV virus/infection.
- 2) Air pollution and passive smoking as a cause of cardiopulmonary problems.
- 3) The harmful fatty acids.
- 4) Establishing links between diabetes and coronary heart disease on the one hand and diet, smoking, obesity and lack of exercise on the other.
- 5) Establishing links between cancer death and modifiable lifestyle habits.
- 6) Determination that aspirin daily can give protection from heart attacks.
- 7) Launched the 'medical errors movement', measuring medical injuries and errors in hospitals.
- 8) Invented the 'iron lung' for polio treatment, then paved the way for the development of polio vaccines in the 1950s.
- 9) Invented the cardiac defibrillator.

10) Showed that in the USA, minorities and the poor received lower quality medical care than whites and those of higher socioeconomic status.

...And many more firsts.

The course itself was interspersed with visits to a community hospital, medical centre, the Harvard University itself and the JF Kennedy museum. Students were given a first hand glimpse of the health care system in the USA, although there was no attempt to hide the fact that, despite the USA spending more per head of population on medical care, their system languished in 37th place in the WHO ranking of health system performance.

Apart from this, the course covered all aspects of quality, tools for measuring and improving quality, accreditation, human resources, negotiation and conflict resolution, error reduction, patient safety and evidence-based medicine.

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In profile...Melissa Harvey

Melissa has been appointed as the new Accreditation Coordinator - Corporate Office and Acute Networks. She has been working in health for 27 years.

She completed her nursing training at Royal Newcastle Hospital before the obligatory jaunt overseas where she worked and travelled for 18 months in Europe. On her return she worked part-time until completing a Bachelor of Science (Biology) in 1991 and then started a career in Operating Theatres during which time she completed a Professional Practice Certificate in Perioperative Nursing. While studying for a Master in Health Services Management, Melissa became a NUM2 in 1999 and continued in that position until 2005 when she accepted secondments as the Greater Newcastle Acute Hospital Group



Accreditation Coordinator and more recently with the Innovation and Reform unit as a coordinator for the Booked Surgical Patient Journey project – Preadmission and Preparation.

Melissa has always had a strong interest in Accreditation "because it encourages us to spend time reflecting on the changes and improvements we make everyday but are often too busy to realise. It also ties all aspects of corporate and clinical practice together to ensure all activities

are ultimately focussed on improving patient outcomes".

During her management career Melissa has been heavily involved in a variety of areas including OH&S, Policy and Procedure development, disaster management, infection control and pandemic planning.

During her time with Accreditation and BSPJ she has enjoyed meeting and working with new people and visiting other hospitals and seeing all the great work everyone was doing and hopes to expand this in her new role.

Aside from work, Melissa is married and loves books, wine, food, the bush and animals and any spare time or money seems to be spent on the never-ending house renovations.

Quality improvements

from page one

It was directed towards an international perspective which included the problems of the third world countries as well as western medical care. There was all the time a discussion of the role of private health and the need for a balance between the public and private sectors.

Course directors were Dr. Paul Campbell and Dr. Ann Lawthers with input from the faculty. All in all a superbly presented and well organised course from the world's leading institution in this field.

** Dr John Fisher is Hunter New England Health Associate Director, Clinical Governance.*

Newsflash...

New Accreditation Co-ordinator - Corporate Office and Acute Networks

Clinical Governance is very pleased to announce the appointment of our new Accreditation Co-ordinator - Corporate Office and Acute Networks Melissa Harvey. Melissa will co-ordinate the accreditation process for the HNE Health Corporate Office Functions and Acute Networks and is the subject of this month's staff profile (see profile to left). We look forward to welcoming Melissa to the Clinical Governance team and to this important role for HNE Health.

Clinical ethics are clearly on the health service agenda

For some months, there has been discussions about our approach to clinical ethics, with particular reference to providing support to staff and to further developing our policy framework around the many clinical ethical matters that impact in patient care across the health service.

It has been agreed that the HNE Health Clinical Ethics Framework will incorporate development of policies and guidelines and the promotion of staff education on clinical ethical issues; the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of clinical ethics activity and the facilitation of communication and networking between different sites and services across the Area.

It will be supported by a committee structure that involves an Area wide Clinical Ethics Committee, supported by local Clinical Ethics Reference Groups, which is designed to ensure existing clinical ethics expertise is shared across HNE Health.

The Clinical Ethics Committee will prima-

riarily have a governance function, while the Clinical Ethics Reference Groups will provide expertise and advice to health care professionals on clinical ethical issues as they arise and contribute to clinical ethics education and training locally and across the health service.

Information relating to their activities and any potential policy, training or educational matters that have Area-wide implications will be reported to the Clinical Ethics Committee.

The HNE Health Clinical Ethics framework is being implemented through Clinical Governance during the first half of 2008.

The AET Executive Sponsor is the Director Clinical Governance, Dr Kim Hill.

The initiative will also enhance professional development and education in clinical ethics by further developing relationships between HNE Health and the Clinical Unit in Ethics and Health Law (CUEHL).

CUEHL, a multidisciplinary group that has developed an internationally recognised in-

novative and effective approach to teaching, is a collaboration between academic staff of the University of Newcastle, clinicians and senior staff from Hunter New England Health and interested community members.

Information about the CUEHL sessions is included in *Quality Matters*.

If you are interested participating in either the Clinical Ethics Committee or your local Clinical Ethics Reference Group please contact Associate Director Clinical Governance Dr Naomi Lee; Director of the Clinical Unit in Ethics and Health Law, University of Newcastle Dr Peter Saul; or Professional Officer (Research Ethics and Governance) HNE Research Ethics Unit Dr Nicole Gerrand for further information.

Contact details:

Dr Naomi Lee - ph 4985 5446

Dr Nicole Gerrand - ph 4921 4950

Dr Peter Saul - 4921 4782



QualityMatters

Winners of the 2007 Clinical Governance Christmas quiz

Over 100 entries were received in the 2007 Clinical Governance Christmas Quiz and is pleased to announce the winners of the 2007.

The winners were the first three correct entries drawn from the santa sack.

All winners have now received their prizes and hopefully took the opportunity of the Christmas break to enjoy them.

1st prize: Kylie Kupina, Occupational Therapist, Spinal-cord Injury Service (hamper).

2nd prize: Kate Laurie, CNC Respiratory, Peel (\$30 book voucher from MacLean's bookshop).

3rd prize: Jenny Jennings, Population Health and Planning (bottle of champagne)

Pictured right: Chief Executive Dr Nigel Lyons, with the assistance of Director Clinical Governance Dr Kim Hill, draws the winners of the 2007 Clinical Governance Christmas quiz.



Expressions of interest sought

Patient Safety is looking for consultants from all specialities and disciplines interested in participating in Root Cause Analysis teams in their area of expertise or providing expert advice as required to an RCA team.

It is anticipated that maintaining a list of experts will assist RCA Team Leaders when bringing together an RCA team and RCA teams in accessing valuable clinical and expert advice as required. RCAs involve

three meetings at a maximum and all must be completed within a strict time frame of 70 days and this is a key performance measure for Patient Safety. If you are interested in participating on RCA teams contact Acting Area Patient Safety Manager Ms Diane Dolan on 4921 4927 or diane.dolan@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au or Associate Director Clinical Governance Dr Naomi Lee on 4985 5446.

Policy news - policy register now online

Observers of the HNE Health website may have noticed some recent changes to the Policy, Guidelines and Protocols section.

The HNE Health Policy Register, which lists and has links to all current (including new) HNE Health policies, is now online and will be launched in coming weeks. Clinical Governance has been responsible for Policy Development and Management since 2006. Since that time hundreds of policy documents of the former Area Health Services have been reviewed. Most documents were found to be obsolete

and/or not apply Area-wide and therefore have been archived.

As a consequence the HNE Health Policy Register contains only 30 or so policies. These are Area-wide statements of corporate or clinical action requiring mandatory compliance. Each policy has a policy contact officer listed along side it – please contact them for more information about the policy if required.

NSW Health Policy Directives (PDs) com-

prise the other source of information directing mandatory activity in HNE Health. NSW Health PDs automatically apply in HNE Health, and there is no need for a separate policy covering the same information.

For more information about policy or the policy process please contact Dr Rosemary Aldrich Associate Director Clinical Governance on 4921 4935 or rosemary.aldrich@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au

A reminder for all managers

A reminder for all managers to complete dates in IIMS as soon as possible after acknowledging and resolving/closing complaint. Reports for 2007 complaint handling timeframes will be run in mid February.

Looking at ways to improve clinical handover: ISBAR

I am, **S**ituation, **B**ackground, **A**ssessment, **R**ecommendation (ISBAR).

Around 65 per cent of serious adverse events have communication failures as the root cause of the death of patient.

During 2007 a group of clinical experts led by Clinical Governance and the Clinical Communications Reference Group, has been analysing methods to improve communication in our organisation.

ISBAR is a system for interpersonal communication developed by the Veterans administration hospitals in the United States. It has led to significant improvements in the safety of patients.

A team of interested clinicians at Tamworth are now exploring methods of using ISBAR as a way of improving the structure and content of Resident, Nursing and Allied Health handover.

There is common information that should be available to all groups in order to make the patient journey. It is anticipated that ISBAR will be used to support inter-hospital as well as ward transfers. Eventually IT will be used to support the structure of the system that evolves.

Dr Lisa Darke, a Medical Registrar at Tamworth will lead this extremely important initiative with the support of the JMO Unit and Clinical Governance. For more information contact: Dr Stephen O'Mara, Associate Director Clinical Governance on stephen.o'mara@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au