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QualityMatters

The monthly newsletter of Hunter New England Health Clinical Governance

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Comments and
queries welcome at:
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From the Director...

The past two months have seen several events that recognise and celebrate endeavours in patient care and quality improvement in Hunter New England Health. The annual Quality Exposition and Scientific Program was a great success, and we are looking forward to seeing the results of the evaluations provided by those who



attended. This month we report on the outcome of the NSW Health Awards, and you will be pleased

to see that several of the HNE Health entries were recognised at the highest levels for their positive impact on clinical service delivery.

Also this month, the first of our HNE Health Patient Safety Officers is profiled. The Patient Safety Officers are integral to our quality and safety response, and work from various locations in clusters and hospitals across

Hunter New England Health. As you will see, their backgrounds include clinical nurse, allied health and health professional roles, and I hope that the profiles will give you an opportunity in this way to "meet" some of the Clinical Governance team who undertake these roles in different parts of our Area Health Service.

Dr Kim Hill
Director,
Clinical Governance

Staff awarded for excellence and innovation

Everyone involved in the delivery of health care (whether they are patients, carers or consumers of health, clinicians, managers, executives or other service providers) has an interest in ensuring that quality of care is of high priority.

Clinical Governance takes a very proactive approach to this by providing cross-organisational support and facilitation to Clinical Operations and Corporate Services through organisational development, change management and education and training in quality and continuous practice improvement.

Support for systems wide practice change and the outcomes that have been achieved as evident in the projects submitted to the NSW Health Awards are testament to the

work of the Clinical Governance team.

The NSW Health Awards were announced at a dinner in Sydney on 11 October 2007. These awards provide a valuable opportunity each year to recognise outstanding contributions of health care workers from across the state. This also rounded off what has been a very rewarding five month period, since the original call for submissions to the HNE Health Quality Awards in May 2007.

Congratulations to all finalists and winning entries. We were delighted to receive the following:

- Winner of the Minister's Excellence Award and winner in the Build a Sustainable Health Workforce category – the 'Australian Medical Council Graduates – Setting Them Up To

Succeed' project.

- Winner of the Director-General's Encouragement Award – the 'Advanced liver disease: A new system for supporting patients' project.
- Winner of the Clinical Excellence Commission Award for Improvement in Patient Safety and finalist in the Build Regional and Other Partnerships for Health category – the 'PAST: Pre-hospital Acute Stroke Triage' project (won by Hunter New England Health in partnership with NSW Ambulance Service).
- Finalist in the Make Prevention Everybody's Business category – the 'Reduction of Multi-resistant Organism Transmission in Tertiary Intensive Care' project.

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In profile... *Damion Brown*

Damion is the first of the 15 Patient Safety Officers to appear *In Profile*.

Damion's position encompasses the Peel Cluster - Gunnedah, Barraba, Manilla, Walcha and Tamworth Community Health. He has worked in this role for two years after filling various positions in Tamworth Hospital.

A "nurse by trade" Damion completed post graduate training and secured a position in the Acute Care Unit at Tamworth, soon progressing to CNS status.

During this time he relieved in the after hours hospital management and became involved in the



Damion Brown
Patient Safety Officer,
Peel Cluster

Connecting Critical Care Telehealth project in conjunction with NSW Health.

He has also delved into community and emergency nursing and relief management in one of HNE Health's smaller hospitals.

His rural background has driven him to support rural facilities and achieve high levels of clinical excellence and strives to achieve innovation driven from these smaller sites.

In summary, Damion would describe himself as a passionate environmentalist and opportunist!

You can contact him by telephone on 6767 8480 or via email Damion.Brown@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au

Excellence recognised at NSW Health Awards

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Further information regarding all of these projects can be located at the clinical governance website at: http://intranet.hne.health.nsw.gov.au/cg/quality_improvement_including_continuous_practice_improvement

To assist people in designing and constructing projects for submission for a quality or health care award, two work shops have been scheduled on Tuesday, 30 October in Tamworth and Thursday, 1 November in Newcastle.

A member of the judging panel from the NSW Health Awards will be on hand to provide advice and direction and to provide feedback from a judging panel perspective.

Further information regarding these workshops can be obtained by contacting Laura Juratowitch on 4921 4041 or laura.juratowitch@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au

NSW Health's Quality Systems Assessment (QSA)

The Quality Systems Assessment program is a new initiative for the NSW Health system and a key component of the NSW Patient Safety and Clinical Quality Program, focusing on controlling risks and clinical quality improvements. The QSA program is one of a range of activities that aim to assess, improve or provide assurance on patient safety and clinical quality in the NSW Health system.

The QSA will create a baseline measurement of a range of quality and safety elements and will be reviewed every five years to demonstrate compliance and organisational improvement in systems to improve patient safety. The baseline assessment is to be conducted over an eight week period commencing October 2007 and is to establish:

- Compliance with policies, standards and guidelines
- Level of development of patient safety systems and clinical quality improvement
- Improvement at a local, facility and system level

The assessments to be conducted across three levels within the

organisation are to provide a system wide perspective. The three levels are:

- Area Health Service (AHS): focused on establishment of systems, processes and guidelines, performance monitoring
 - Facility / Network: focused on implementation and local adaptation of AHS systems, processes and guidelines, performance monitoring
 - Department / Clinical Unit: focused on day to day application of processes and guidelines, risk management, risk control and performance monitoring
- These assessments will be carried out by multidisciplinary teams.

Feedback regarding the organisation's performance and outcomes along with the organisations benchmarked performance against the NSW Health system in general will be available by February 2008.

Clinical Governance will then assist in preparing a Strategic Improvement Plan to address issues that have been highlighted in the self assessment process. For more info contact Tonia Easton, Area Quality Manager, 6767 7233 or tonia.easton@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au or other members of Clinical Governance on 4921 4913.

Do you know what Qualified Privilege is?

As a member of an RCA team you have Qualified Privilege.

This means RCA team members are protected by legislation and can speak frankly and openly in RCA team discussions.

Qualified Privilege also means team members have obligations.

As an RCA team member you are not allowed to communicate or record any information you acquire as a member.

The only exceptions are for the purpose of exercising your functions as a member.

This provision of the Act enables those interviewed by the team to feel secure in providing truthful responses to questions raised by the team.

For further information on Qualified Privilege and being a member of an RCA team contact Di Dolan, Acting Area Patient Safety Manager on 4921 4927 or dianne.dolan@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au



Open disclosure: is the failure to disclose an adverse event negligent?

In a 2005 case, the right spinal accessory nerve was severed during a surgical procedure for the removal of a neck lump.

The patient alleged the surgeon was negligent in that:

- (a) they had failed to inform the patient of their suspicion that they had severed that nerve;
- (b) they had failed by appropriate examination to confirm that they had severed the nerve;
- (c) they failed to refer the patient to an appropriate specialist for timely remedial surgery.

Although the operation summary noted the possibility of the division of accessory nerve, there was no mention of it in the discharge summary and neither the patient nor the patient's general practitioner was informed of the possibility. In this case, the Court accepted that the duty to a patient includes the duty to disclose adverse events and the findings in negligence included the failure to advise the patient prior to discharge from hospital of the suspected severance of the nerve.

Timely open disclosure is good for patients and good for practitioners. No one needs to be part of an adversarial situation where this can be avoided.



Open disclosure: Open disclosure is good for patients and good for health practitioners.

Hunter New England Health selected as finalist in Risk Management Awards

Hunter New England Health has been selected as a finalist in The Treasury Managed Fund (TMF) 2007 Risk Management Award under the category 'Integrating Risk Management Into Organisational

Planning'. The purpose of these awards are to identify, recognise and celebrate risk management practice within the New South Wales Public Sector. HNE Health will be advised at the Public

Sector Risk Management Association Annual Function and TMF Awards Event on 4 December of the final outcome.

We will update you in a future edition of *Quality Matters*.

RCA Update

A complaint about analgesia management for a palliative care patient led to an Root Cause Analysis (RCA) finding that analgesia management of palliative care patients could be improved with the implementation of best practice analgesia regimens and delivery systems.



The RCA team recommended the development of an Area-wide protocol and this task has been enthusiastically embraced by the Area Palliative Care Stream.

This team will review protocols in place across Hunter New England Health against current best practice for analgesia delivery and implement a standardised tool for adoption across the Health Service.

Safety alerts and notices

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/quality/sabs/register.html>

Please click on the hyperlink under 'Issues covered' for more information:

| Number | Type | Issues covered | Date of issue |
|-----------|---|---|---------------|
| SA:004/07 |  Safety alert | Electronic Fetal Heart Rate Monitoring (supercedes Safety Notice SN:008/07) | 4 Oct 07 |
| SN:014/07 |  Safety notice | Therapeutic Goods Association Recalls (TGA) | 3 Oct 07 |

Quality Matters

Quality Matters is the monthly newsletter of Hunter New England Health Clinical Governance. If you have any suggestions, comments or story ideas please email clinicalgovernance@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au