

HQIP to commission first national clinical audit of perioperative care



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Director

The Health Quality Improvement Partnership (HQIP) announced in September that the National Emergency Laparotomy Network (NELN, formerly Emergency Laparotomy Network) is one of eleven new national audits to be commissioned. The NELN and three other audits have been selected for immediate funding from the 2011–12 budget. The remaining seven audits will be supported as funds become available.

Commissioned audits were judged against a number of criteria including evidence of sub-optimal care, and the potential for significant improvements in that care, evidence of variation in care quality and evidence that the audit might reduce this inequality, presence of relevant standards and measures, and alignment with current health policy direction. The HQIP chief executive, Robin Burgess, commented that the submitted proposal was ‘felt to be clear in concept and design, and to meet the requirements of the criteria published by the National Clinical Audit Advisory Group, as well as covering a clinical area which the Department of Health feels would benefit from the introduction of a new national audit.’

This is important news for anaesthesia as a profession: the NELN will be the first national audit focussing primarily on perioperative care (as opposed to surgical factors or critical care). It is also a great success for the NELN team led by Dr Dave Murray (James Cook University Hospital, Middlesbrough) and a rewarding product of the close collaboration between the NELN and the HSRC.

HQIP and National Audits

Responsibility for the national clinical audit programme was transferred from the then Healthcare Commission to HQIP in 2008. HQIP is a collaborative partnership between the clinical professions and patient organizations, and is a consortium of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, the Royal College of Nursing, and National Voices (formerly the Long-term Conditions Alliance). Following a competitive tendering process, HQIP was awarded the contract to manage and develop the National Clinical Audit and Patient Outcomes Programme (NCAPOP). NCAPOP comprises 30 clinical audits encompassing the care of patients with medical, surgical and mental health conditions.

HQIP plans to expand national audit coverage by inviting applications for new clinical audits as new funding becomes available, and some audits transpose to a subscription based funding model. The aim is to achieve comprehensive coverage across all areas of clinical practice where need can be demonstrated, whilst avoiding unnecessary duplication of activity. Collaboration between audits is encouraged.

HQIP and the Confidential Enquiries

HQIP has also recently taken over responsibility for the Confidential Enquiries (more formally known as the Clinical Outcome Review Programmes) from the National Patient Safety Agency. HQIP has therefore awarded contracts to the National Confidential Enquiry into Patient Outcome and Death (NCEPOD) for the Medical and Surgical programme, the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide for Mental Health (NCISH) for the Mental Health programme, and the Royal College of Paediatric and Child Health for the Child Health programme. A new provider is being sought for the Maternal, Infant and Perinatal programme (MIP).

Looking forward

The next step is for HQIP to turn the submitted NELN application into a formal specification, with input from a broader spectrum of stakeholders and experts. Tenders will then be invited from interested and eligible parties. The RCoA intends to bid to run this audit through the HSRC. Our ambition is that the infrastructure and expertise that results will form the core of an expanding audit of perioperative care, focusing on areas of need within anaesthetic and perioperative care. Most excitingly, the NELN and anaesthetists throughout the UK will have access to data which can inform change, drive up standards and lead to improvements in patient care.

Links

- The Health Quality Improvement Partnership: www.hqip.org.uk
- Emergency Laparotomy Network: www.networks.nhs.uk/nhs-networks/emergency-laparotomy-network