

NEWS

National Health Network Joins Best Care...Always

By Dirkie Theunissen, NHN task team representative: Best Care...Always

Despite improvements in monitoring mechanisms, drug therapy and technology, hospital-acquired infections (HAIs) remain an ongoing challenge within the hospital environment. As the number of clinical options and interventions mounts, the risk that certain critical processes will be omitted is a real concern.

In August 2009, Best Care...Always (BCA) - a collaborative industry initiative - was launched with a view to improving patient safety and the quality of care delivered in both the public and private healthcare sectors. BCA promotes the application of five quality improvement interventions, four of which are procedure-specific clinical tasks specifically focused on the prevention of certain HAIs. This initiative is supported by various stakeholders in the healthcare industry including public and private hospitals, the Department of Health, funders, doctors, pharmaceutical companies and clinical and professional associations.

The National Hospital Network (NHN), which represents some 91 independently owned private healthcare facilities including hospitals, day

clinics, psychiatric hospitals and ophthalmology and sub-acute clinics, has opted for membership and participation in the BCA campaign.

Improving standard of care

The NHN firmly believes that the healthcare market should compete on the basis of the quality of care patients receive and we recognise the contribution and role that BCA will play in elevating the standard of care in the NHN stable.

Arwyp Medical Centre (Arwyp) was selected by the NHN to pilot the rollout of BCA. In October 2009, Arwyp commenced with the implementation of three BCA clinical bundles including:

- Ventilator-associated pneumonia;
- Catheter-associated urinary tract infections; and
- Catheter-related bloodstream infections.



Dirkie Theunissen

Subsequent to the pilot at Arwyp, all NHN members were invited to join the initiative. To date, a further 14 member hospitals in the Gauteng area have committed to introducing the abovementioned bundles in their facilities.

The first BCA workshop was held in February in Gauteng with over 60 NHN nursing services managers, theatre managers and nursing staff attending. Additional workshops are scheduled for Cape Town on 7 May and Durban on 3 June.

Making antibiotic stewardship work

The intervention relating to antibiotic stewardship is challenging as it has not been tested in other countries in the envisaged format. Antibiotic stewardship highlights both the appropriate use and misuse of antibiotics. The success of this initiative hinges on a real partnership between all stakeholders and will be largely determined by interactions between doctors, pharmacists, microbiologists, unit managers, infection control managers and nursing sisters caring for patients.

Drug-resistant bacteria are a growing problem in hospitals worldwide, marked by the rise

of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and other multidrug-resistant bacteria. Such infections kill 25 000 people a year in Europe.

The overuse of antibiotics is building widespread resistance and threatening vital medical treatments, such as hip replacements and intensive care for premature babies - and antibiotics are needed in all these treatments to prevent bacterial infection.

All patients desire the best-quality outcomes from providers and therefore quality forms the backbone of the services that NHN members provide. In addition to the direct quality improvement benefits the campaign offers, the successful implementation of BCA will indirectly result in a decrease in costs and will, in turn, improve access to health care.

In conclusion, the NHN believes that participation in the BCA initiative will result in a reduction in infections, shorter hospital stays and improved patient outcomes. We urge all NHN members and doctors to become actively involved in BCA - to the ultimate benefit of patients.