

## **203: BEYOND AUDIT – THE PATH FROM CLINICAL AUDIT TO IMPROVED PATIENT CARE**

### **Authors:**

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### **Background:**

A Clinical Audit team has been in place at Sligo General Hospital for two years providing practical support, advice and training to all of the clinical departments and specialities. Clinical audit is seen as a quality improvement tool, which aims to enhance patient care. Most audits identify some potential for improvement. The further challenge is in effecting the changes that will lead to improved patient care.

### **Objective:**

To highlight the factors that enable the desired changes to occur following a clinical audit.

### **Method:**

An evaluation of all completed clinical audit activity from March 2000 to October 2001 was undertaken, using a locally developed audit tool designed by the Clinical Audit Support Team to "audit the audit".

Data was collected via questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. This proforma was designed to retrospectively evaluate:

- Standards used
- Data collection, analysis and presentation
- Implementation and monitoring of change.

Data was analysed using SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences).

### **Results:**

Of the 28 completed audits, 54% resulted in change and improvement. By the time of the evaluation change had not resulted in 46%, however in a third of these audits the results had been used in planning service improvements. We found that in order to implement the changes identified in an audit, the following were required: Leadership, communication, teamwork, project management skills, dedicated time, a regular audit forum and an open organisational culture supported through service plans.

### **Conclusions:**

The path from clinical audit to improved patient care requires additional skills and resources at individual and organisational level. We identified the key skills, organisational structures and supports that led to corrective action following an audit. We also identified the barriers. The difficulties and challenges of moving beyond clinical audit have been highlighted so that specialities and clinical departments may more easily overcome the obstacles to successfully delivering improved patient care.