Clinical governance in aged care

Toolkit
Clinical governance framework guide

This guide is part of a series of resources about clinical governance in aged care that aim to help aged care providers meet their responsibilities for ensuring the quality and safety of clinical care.

The guide is for people responsible for developing a clinical governance framework in an aged care service.

It can be used as the basis for a clinical governance framework for services that do not already have one. This guide can also be used by services that already have a clinical governance framework to review their existing framework and identify opportunities for improvement.

Clinical governance concepts and elements → Clinical governance framework → Clinical quality and safety for consumers

How can you use this tool?

This guide can be used to develop or review a clinical governance framework for an aged care service.

The purpose of a clinical governance framework is to describe the approach of your service to ensuring the quality and safety of clinical care for your consumers. Because of the range of different settings and service models in aged care, there can be a range of different approaches to ensuring the quality and safety of clinical care, and different ways in which this information can be presented in a clinical governance framework.

This guide proposes a simple structure and suggested content for a clinical governance framework that can be used and adapted as needed by your service. It includes seven sections:

1. Introduction
2. Clinical quality and safety and clinical governance
3. Roles and responsibilities
4. Implementation of clinical governance
5. Measures of success
6. Review of the clinical governance framework.
7. Related documents that support the clinical governance framework and achievement of clinical quality and safety.

Within each section, suggestions are provided about what content could be included, and some examples of content are presented in italics that can be used and adapted as needed.

While the size and scope of your clinical governance framework will vary depending on the circumstances of your service, it does not need to be a long document. The purpose of the clinical governance framework

is to describe the overall organisational approach to ensuring clinical quality and safety for your consumers; it does not need to go into detail about specific strategies and actions that will be taken to achieve this. These details may be found in other related documents such as policies, procedures, operational and quality plans, and risk registers. Where an aspect of clinical governance is covered in more detail in another document, this should be noted in the clinical governance framework.

The Aged Care Quality Standards note three specific issues that should be included in a clinical governance framework: antimicrobial stewardship, minimising the use of restraint and open disclosure. These issues should be noted or referred to in your clinical governance framework.

This guide should be used with other parts of this toolkit, including:

· Developing and implementing a clinical governance framework
· Organisational self-assessment tool 1: Aged care service and consumers
· Organisational self-assessment tool 2: Clinical governance arrangements.

Fact sheets that will assist you to complete your framework are:

· Fact sheet 1: Introduction to clinical governance
· Fact sheet 3: Core elements of clinical governance
· Fact sheet 4: Roles and responsibilities for clinical governance.

Note: This guide is provided as an option that aged care services can use if they choose. It is not mandatory, and does not have to be used to meet the requirements of the Aged Care Quality Standards regarding use of a clinical governance framework.

The **length and level of detail** in a clinical governance framework should reflect the complexity of the clinical care that you provide or host. If the clinical care you provide or host is very straightforward, your clinical governance framework should be short and simple. Even if this is the case for your service, it is recommended that some information be included for each of the seven sections in this guide; however this can be brief.

Clinical governance is an integrated set of leadership behaviours, policies, procedures, responsibilities, relationships, planning, monitoring and improvement mechanisms that are implemented to support safe, quality clinical care and good clinical outcomes for each consumer.

The **purpose** of clinical governance is to support the workforce and visiting practitioners in your service to provide safe, quality clinical care as part of an holistic approach to aged care that is based on the needs, goals and preferences of consumers.

Clinical care is health care that encompasses the prevention, treatment and management of illness or injury, as well as the maintenance of psychosocial, mental and physical wellbeing.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this section is to introduce your service and the context in which it operates.

You can include information about:

· The goals, values and culture of your service

· Your service's commitment to clinical quality and safety, and the safety, health and wellbeing of your consumers

· The typical range of clinical care needs of your consumers.

To demonstrate that there is organisational commitment to clinical quality and safety from the top of your service, these statements of culture and commitment should come from the leaders within your service.

This section should also summarise the purpose of the clinical governance framework and to whom it applies.

2. Clinical quality and safety and clinical governance

The purpose of this section is to describe clinical governance as it is applied in your service, and set out the overall clinical quality and safety goals for consumers in your service.

You might want to start by establishing what clinical governance means in your service. The definition of clinical governance used by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission is:

Clinical governance is an integrated set of leadership behaviours, policies, procedures, responsibilities, relationships, planning, monitoring and improvement mechanisms that are implemented to support safe, quality clinical care and good clinical outcomes for each consumer.

Linked with this, and because of the range of actions that are needed to ensure clinical quality and safety, it can be useful to be clear about the overall goals for your consumers regarding their clinical care. These goals can flow through the clinical governance framework and all of your clinical governance activities so that everyone in the organisation shares an understanding of the quality and safety of clinical care to be achieved for every consumer, and how clinical governance supports this.

You should identify clinical quality and safety goals that are relevant for the consumers in your service. An example of a clinical quality and safety goal for consumers is:

All consumers who need clinical care receive care that is safe, coordinated, effective and personal. This care is guided by their needs, goals and preferences and is directed towards optimising their wellbeing and quality of life.

More information about the core concepts of clinical governance and safe, quality clinical care is provided in *Fact sheet 1: Introduction to clinical governance.*

This section should also describe the core elements of clinical governance that will guide action to ensure clinical quality and safety and good clinical outcomes for consumers in your service. The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission identifies six core elements of clinical governance:

1. Leadership and culture

2. Consumer partnerships

3. Organisational system

4. Monitoring and reporting

5. Effective workforce

6. Communication and relationships

More information about these elements is provided in *Fact sheet 3: Core elements of clinical governance*.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The purpose of this section is to set out the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for clinical quality and safety of people in your service.

Detailed roles, responsibilities and accountabilities should be set out for:

- The governing body, such as the board, which is ultimately accountable for quality and safety of clinical care in your service

- Senior executives and managers, who have delegated responsibility for operationalising the clinical governance framework and leading action for clinical quality and safety

- The workforce, which comprises all employed and contracted personnel and who are responsible for working within the provisions of the clinical governance framework when they provide care and services

- Employed, contracted and visiting health practitioners, who are responsible for delivering clinical care within the provisions of the clinical governance framework and practising in accordance with legislative, professional and registration requirements. For visiting health practitioners, these roles, responsibilities and accountabilities need to be described following the collaborative development of agreements and protocols about the provision of clinical care.

This section should also include details of committees with functions that relate to clinical governance, and how they fit within your organisational structure to support clinical quality and safety. The nature of these committees will vary depending on the circumstances of your service. You could include an organisation chart to illustrate these relationships.

More information about roles and responsibilities is in *Fact sheet 4: Roles and responsibilities for clinical governance*.

4. Implementation of clinical governance

The purpose of this section is to describe the implementation of your clinical governance framework, and note the key actions that you will undertake to ensure clinical quality and safety for your consumers.

This section should not be too detailed as the clinical governance framework should be supported by additional plans, policies and procedures that provide more detail about specific strategies and activities.

The actions in this section should be specific to your service, and informed by the nature of the services you provide, the needs of your consumers, and your existing clinical governance arrangements. The two organisational self-assessment tools that focus on the nature of your service and your existing clinical governance arrangements will help you to identify areas that should be a focus for action. In addition, *Fact sheet 3: Core elements of clinical governance* may help to identify actions that can be taken in each of the six core elements of clinical governance.

Some of the actions in this section may be one-off processes to address gaps in your clinical governance arrangements that you have identified as part of your self-assessment processes. Some actions will be ongoing to ensure that the focus on clinical quality and safety in your service is maintained.

Following are examples of actions about implementation of clinical governance that you can adapt and add to when describing how you will implement clinical governance in your service.

A. Leadership and culture
- *Provide regular reports on clinical quality and safety performance to the governing body*
- *Ensure there is a plan in place to provide safe, quality clinical care for all consumers, and to improve care when performance monitoring identifies gaps; and that the plan is implemented and regularly reported on*

B. Consumer partnerships
- *Ensure that the needs, goals and preferences of individual consumers are known and recorded, and guide the delivery of clinical care*
- *Expand opportunities for consumers to provide feedback about their care using a variety of methods and ensure data is reported, analysed and used for improvement*

C. Organisational systems
- *Maintain an organisation-wide risk management system that includes risks to clinical quality and safety, and ensure that these are reviewed and used for improvement*
- *Have policies and procedures that address key clinical risk areas, including infection control, antimicrobial stewardship, minimising the use of restraint, end-of-life care, and deterioration in mental, cognitive and physical health*

D. Monitoring and reporting
- *Identify measures to assess the quality and safety of clinical care experienced by your consumers*
- *Regularly review clinical quality and safety information to identify trends, emerging issues or risks and opportunities for improvement*

E. Effective workforce

- *Ensure employed, contracted and visiting health practitioners have appropriate qualifications and experience to provide clinical care in your service*
- *Identify the clinical quality and safety training needs of your workforce and provide or facilitate access to appropriate training*

F. Communication and relationships

- *Have good record keeping systems to support clinical quality and safety*
- *Use structured processes and templates to share information when consumers are transferred to or from external healthcare providers*

5. Measures of success

The purpose of this section is to describe the ways in which you will know you have been successful in establishing and maintaining effective clinical governance and ensuring the quality and safety of clinical care.

The specific measures of success used in your service will reflect progress towards your clinical quality and safety goals, the effectiveness of your clinical governance arrangements, and the impact of activities you will undertake to implement the clinical governance framework.

Examples of measures of success for each of the six core elements of clinical governance are provided on the following page. These can be used and adapted in your clinical governance framework.

These examples focus mainly on the processes of implementing clinical governance. You also need to monitor the outcomes of these efforts. This should include measurement of overall wellbeing, the experience of consumers regarding clinical care, and links to the National Aged Care Mandatory Quality Indicator Program. Clinical indicators and outcomes could include:

- Falls
- Immunisation
- Infections, such as urinary tract infections
- Medication-related incidents
- Prescribing of psychotropic medicines
- Pressure injuries
- Unplanned weight loss
- Use of physical restraint.

Clinical governance element	Measures of success
Leadership and culture	*The governing body and executive have an active plan to achieve a set of strategic goals and priorities for clinical quality and safety that are known and understood throughout the service* *Staff report positively about their experience of working in the service*
Consumer partnerships	*The clinical needs, goals and preferences of consumers are recorded in their care plans and regularly updated* *Consumers and their representatives report positively about their experience of involvement in their own clinical care and in service improvements*
Organisational systems	*Key clinical risk areas are known and addressed in policies and procedures* *The workforce is aware of key policies and procedures for clinical quality and safety and operate within them*
Monitoring and reporting	*Clinical quality and safety measures are monitored* *Information about clinical quality and safety performance is used by the executive and governing body to make decisions about improvement*
Effective workforce	*Orientation and training for the workforce outlines clear goals and expectations for the quality and safety of clinical care to be delivered* *Staff are confident in performing their clinical care role*
Communication and relationships	*Information about a consumer's clinical needs, goals and preferences and care is easily available to the workforce and is used to guide care delivery*

6. Review of the clinical governance framework

The purpose of this section is to describe how you will review your clinical governance framework.

Generally you will only need to review your framework every two years, although if your service or consumer profile changes over time, or risks change or emerge, you may need to do so more frequently. Other times when it may be useful to review your clinical governance framework include when there are changes in the leadership of your service or other significant staffing arrangements. This section should describe who has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the clinical governance framework, and how this will occur.

As part of your review process you could examine:

- How the clinical governance framework has been introduced, explained and promoted within the service

- Whether staff are aware of the clinical governance framework and operate within in it when providing clinical care

- Whether the actions specified in the framework have been undertaken

- Whether the actions in the clinical governance framework are fit for purpose or need to be reviewed

- Changes in clinical practice, clinical quality and safety, clinical outcomes, and achievement of goals for clinical quality and safety

- External changes that may have an impact on the provision of safe, quality clinical care in your service.

7. Related documents

The purpose of this section is to list the key strategies, plans, policies, procedures, legislation and standards that underpin and support the clinical governance framework.

Examples of related documents may include:

- Strategic and operational plans
- Workforce strategy
- Policies and procedures relating to key clinical areas
- Policies and procedures that support effective partnerships with consumers
- Aged Care Quality Standards.

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