



## Clinical governance in aged care

# Fact sheet 4:

# Roles and responsibilities for clinical governance

**This is part of a series of fact sheets 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.**

**This fact sheet is for members of governing bodies, executives and managers of residential, home care and flexible care services; as well as those Commonwealth Home Support Program services that deliver clinical care<sup>1</sup>. It can also be used by people developing a clinical governance framework for an aged care service.**

It describes the main roles and responsibilities for clinical governance for different people working in an aged care service.



## Why do you need to read this fact sheet?

This fact sheet builds on *Fact sheet 1: Introduction to clinical governance* and provides more detail about roles and responsibilities for clinical governance. This will help you understand the clinical governance responsibilities of everyone working in an aged care service, what they should be held to account for, and how they need to be supported to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. This information can be used to inform your clinical governance framework, as well as your workforce<sup>2</sup>, training and recruitment processes.

**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.

A **clinical governance framework** describes the overall approach of the organisation for ensuring the quality and safety of clinical care for 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 Clinical governance should be included in the broader corporate governance arrangements of providers of residential care, home care, short-term restorative care, transition care, as well as Multi-Purpose Service Program services and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program services. Commonwealth Home Support Program services that deliver clinical care should also include clinical governance in their corporate governance arrangements. Commonwealth Home Support Program services that do not deliver clinical care do not need to have a clinical governance framework.
- 2 In this fact sheet the term 'workforce' applies to all personnel who are employed or contracted by an aged care service. This includes health practitioners, staff who provide personal care, and staff who have an indirect role in providing care to consumers.

## Roles and responsibilities for clinical governance

Everyone working in an aged care service, including members of governing bodies<sup>3</sup> such as boards, senior executives, managers, health practitioners, personal care staff and other staff who have an indirect role in providing care or services, is accountable for their contribution to clinical quality and safety. To be able to provide safe, quality care, people need to know what their roles and responsibilities are and be supported and held accountable for achieving them.

Key roles and responsibilities for clinical governance are described in this fact sheet. You can use this information to set out the roles and responsibilities of different people within your aged care service; this information should be included in your clinical governance framework.

## Members of governing bodies, such as boards

The governing body is accountable for clinical quality and safety and the clinical governance arrangements within your service. Its key responsibilities are to:

- Set a clear vision, strategic direction and strong organisational culture that drives consistently safe, quality clinical care
- Lead an organisational culture that is open and transparent by communicating the service's values and being engaged, visible and accessible to the workforce
- Ensure robust clinical governance arrangements are implemented across the service to effectively support and empower the workforce and visiting practitioners to provide safe, quality clinical care
- Understand key clinical risks for the service, ensure that controls and mitigation strategies are in place to address them, and that these are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain effective
- Monitor and evaluate all aspects of clinical care through regular and rigorous reviews of clinical quality and safety performance data
- Delegate responsibility to the senior executive and relevant committees for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the service's clinical governance arrangements and the provision of safe and quality clinical care

<sup>3</sup> The governing body is the individual or group of people with overall responsibility and ultimate accountability for the organisation. This includes responsibility for the strategic and operational decisions that affect the quality and safety of care and services.

## Senior executives

The chief executive officer and other members of your service's senior executive have delegated responsibility for the overall operational management of your service.

This includes responsibilities to:

- Provide visible leadership and commitment in delivering and supporting the strategic direction and culture set by the governing body regarding the quality and safety of clinical care
- Determine the best approach to planning, implementing, evaluating and improving clinical quality and safety
- Prioritise and focus on the key clinical quality and safety issues and risk areas for the service
- Ensure that adequate support, education, information and opportunities are provided to the workforce to enable them to fulfil their roles in providing safe and quality clinical care
- Ensure adequate resources are directed towards ensuring consistently safe, quality care
- Present analysis and discussion of clinical quality and safety data to the governing body including feedback from consumers, audit results, accreditation reports, incidents, compliments and complaints
- Monitor implementation progress of clinical governance activities and other action to improve clinical quality and safety, and take further action as needed

## Operational managers

Operational managers have day-to day oversight of clinical quality and safety in their areas of responsibility. This includes responsibilities to:

- Provide a safe and respectful environment for consumers, the workforce and visiting practitioners that supports and encourages positive partnerships, and encourages consumers and the workforce to identify and raise concerns about clinical quality and safety
- Understand the challenges and complexity of providing consistently safe, quality clinical care and support the workforce and visiting practitioners through a culture of respect, safety, transparency, accountability, teamwork and collaboration
- Actively identify, monitor and manage areas of risk for the service and individual consumers and lead appropriate escalation and response where there are concerns about the clinical outcomes or wellbeing of consumers
- Ensure clinical care is provided in accordance with evidence-based best practice, organisational policy, legislation and standards
- Ensure the workforce is clear about its roles and responsibilities; is supported with resources, standards, systems, knowledge and skills development; and is held to account for the quality and safety of the clinical care it provides, supervises or directs
- Coordinate and report on internal audit processes, performance indicators and quality activities within their service areas
- Encourage reporting of incidents and clinical safety issues using risk and incident management systems and respond positively to incidents to support continuous improvement
- Provide data about clinical quality and safety performance to the workforce

## The workforce

The workforce comprises all personnel who are employed or contracted by an aged care service, including health practitioners, staff who provide personal care, and staff who have an indirect role in providing care to consumers. All members of the workforce are responsible for working within the provisions of the clinical governance framework to support clinical quality and safety. This includes responsibilities to:

- Prioritise the provision of safe, quality care and services to consumers every time
- Provide care and services in accordance with evidence-based policies, procedures, protocols and standards
- Engage in ongoing learning, development and performance reviews to develop and maintain skills and competence to be able to perform roles and responsibilities for clinical quality and safety
- Speak up and raise concerns, including reporting incidents and risks relating to clinical quality and safety
- Work to improve the quality and safety of clinical care, participate in improvement activities and contribute to a culture of respect, safety, transparency, accountability, teamwork and collaboration

## Health practitioners

All health practitioners, whether they are employed, contracted or visiting, are accountable for delivering clinical care that meets relevant professional standards. Health practitioners have responsibilities to:

- Maintain their professional registration, accreditation or membership
- Work within their defined scope of practice
- Practise in accordance with relevant legislation, professional standards and codes of conduct
- Be aware of the clinical governance framework of the aged care service and be willing to practise within it
- Provide clinical care that aligns with evidence-based best practice and agreed and documented clinical guidelines, pathways and standards
- Work with the aged care provider to ensure that the service environment supports them to provide clinical care in accordance with relevant professional standards

## Roles of consumers and their representatives in clinical governance and clinical quality and safety

Clinical governance is based on partnerships, and consumers and their representatives also have an important role in supporting the quality and safety of clinical care, particularly as they are increasingly shaping choices about the aged care services they receive. Roles for consumers and their representatives in clinical governance and clinical quality and safety can include:

- Communicating their preferences about clinical care
- Providing information for the assessment and planning of clinical care
- Asking questions about their clinical care
- Making or sharing decisions about clinical care
- Communicating changes in their condition to care providers
- Providing feedback about their experiences of the aged care service
- Participating in co-design processes with the aged care service.

## Actions you can take after reading this fact sheet

- Ensure the roles and responsibilities for clinical governance and clinical quality and safety are clearly described and understood by everyone working in your service
- Review position descriptions, the charter for the governing body, terms of reference for relevant committees and other documents to ensure they reflect the roles and responsibilities for clinical governance and clinical quality and safety
- Include these roles and responsibilities in your clinical governance framework

## Resources

### Clinical governance fact sheets

- Fact sheet 1: Introduction to clinical governance
- Fact sheet 3: Core elements of clinical governance

### Clinical governance framework toolkit

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



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