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ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE

ANZ Audit of Surgical Mortality points to Safer Surgical Health Care Practices

Wednesday 3rd December, 2014

The 5th National Report of the Australian and New Zealand Audits of Surgical Mortality (ANZASM) was released today by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS).

The Report, involving the clinical review of all cases where patients have died while under the care of a surgeon, pointed strongly to safer surgical health care practices.

The Chair of ANZASM, Professor Guy Maddern, said he was pleased to note that the proportion of surgeons actively participating in the audit had significantly increased, from 60 per cent in 2009 to 96 per cent in 2013.

"All public hospitals in Australia now participate in the audit, with private sector participation at 89 per cent, up from 73 per cent in 2011," Professor Maddern said.

"In July 2013 the Queensland Health Department agreed to fund the participation of private hospitals and these figures have been included in this report," he said.

The mortality audit program is part of a quality assurance activity aimed at the ongoing improvement of surgical care. Clinical reviews are conducted by surgeons who practice in the same specialty but from a different hospital.

"The Annual Report provides overview data of the results, but the detail can only be effectively dealt with in peer-reviewed publications," Prof Maddern said.

Professor Maddern said the key highlights from the 2013 report included:

- It is encouraging to consistently see over the past three years, high levels of consultant involvement in the decision-making process at 86 per cent.
- Issues with communication still feature as a clinical management issue and are an essential component of good patient care. This includes communication between surgeons and their junior staff, between disciplines, and between nursing and medical staff. Close monitoring of postoperative management is important to reduce complications especially in high risk patients.
- These findings have led the regional audits of surgical mortality to develop and deliver a series of education programs aimed at surgeons, as well as junior and senior hospital staff, which address the various facets of communication. It is very encouraging to see the high level of surgical engagement and improvements that have ensued.

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- Greater engagement, collaboration and support from the Departments of Health have led to these activities having positively affected clinical governance and patient care across the country.

Managed and funded by RACS and the state and territory departments of Health, ANZASM presents the outcome of clinical reviews conducted into 18,583 deaths that completed the full audit process over five years from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2013.

The 2014 ANZASM Report is available on the RACS website:

http://www.surgeons.org/for-health-professionals/audits-and-surgical-research/anzasm

About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in New Zealand and Australia. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. The College represents nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.
www.surgeons.org

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