



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE

College of Surgeons to insist on proven record of hand hygiene

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Medical graduates wishing to pursue a career in surgery will have to demonstrate a commitment to hand hygiene if they are to be accepted into the training program of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.

The College's Education Board has given in-principle support to making selection into the College's Surgical Education and Training (SET) program conditional on certification by Hand Hygiene Australia (HHA).

HHA is the agency engaged by the Australian Commission on Quality and Safety in Health Care to implement the National Hand Hygiene Initiative. This task involves the collection of data relating to hand hygiene in both the public and private health sectors, and the education of health professionals on the vital importance of hand washing.

Medical professionals are expected to wash their hands between the treatment of patients, thereby minimising the chance of their contributing to the spread of infections.

A measure of HHA's effectiveness in this role is reflected in the fact that it is to be honoured this week by the World Health Organisation.

HHA certifies doctors who have successfully completed its learning modules, thereby demonstrating an understanding of, and commitment to, hand hygiene. The College will work with HHA to develop learning modules specific to surgery.

The College's Dean of Education, Professor Bruce Barraclough, said the requirement for HHA certification will apply to doctors seeking acceptance into the College's 2013 SET intake.

"The requirement that our new Trainees have this proven commitment to hand hygiene reflects the College's ongoing emphasis on the fundamental importance of hand washing," Professor Barraclough said. "The College already awards marks for appropriate hand hygiene practice as part of the Clinical Examination undertaken by Trainees and as a component of the Australian and New Zealand Surgical Skills Education and Training (ASSET) course."

Professor Barraclough, himself a world renowned expert on health care quality, noted recent reports that hospital acquired infections are a serious issue to be addressed.

"An article published today in the *Medical Journal of Australia* reconfirms that appropriate educational measures can help address infection rates in our hospitals.

"It is imperative that all health professionals are aware of the seriousness and the preventable nature of some of these infections, and that is why the College of Surgeons has decided to redouble its own efforts with regard to hand hygiene," Professor Barraclough said.

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