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ACHS response to Private Healthcare Australia (PHA) statement

Minimising preventable hospital errors has been the goal of the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS) for the last 26 years with its Clinical Indicator Program (CIP) - Australia's only comprehensive national clinical database.

According to ACHS President, Adjunct Associate Professor Karen Linegar, the CIP fulfils an important function for the Australian healthcare system by measuring and identifying the critical issues of care at an evidence-based level.

"There is no other such collection of data in this country, and the goal has always been to provide this data to encourage measurable improvements," she said.

"The 21 CI sets are endorsed by the relevant Medical College, Society or Association. They are intended as a tool for in-hospital review rather than rating hospital by a "league table".

"What the Private Healthcare Australia has failed to highlight is the massive improvement that has been demonstrated across many of these indicators in recent years.

"The *"Australasian Clinical Indicator Report"* reveals that healthcare organisations have been responding to a review of their results and are actually improving the care they provide. In 2014, more than 50% of the 197 Clinical Indicators available for trend analysis showed a trend in a desirable direction. An example of this improvement is with the administration of prophylactic antibiotics for caesarean section. The percentage of patients receiving the antibiotics has risen from 64% in 2008 to over 90% now," she said.

Whilst administrative databases can provide much clinical information, they are limited in relation to knowledge of illness severity and preventability. For example with an unplanned readmission to hospital, an administrative database might recognise that it was unplanned, but not that it was *unexpected*. This is an important advantage of the ACHS Clinical Indicator database, for not all of the apparently failed processes of care or untoward outcomes, documented in the medical record will be avoidable.

As the PHA themselves said in 2012 "All indicators are designed to screen, flag or draw attention to a specific clinical issue and therefore should be viewed as pointers rather than absolute makers of performance."

"The good news is that there are measureable improvements occurring and we look forward to launching the 16th edition of the *Australasian Clinical Indicator Report 2007-2014* at the ACHSM/ACHS Joint Congress in Melbourne on 29th October 2015, President Linegar said.

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