The year has ended with a number of important events taking place, not the least of which was the national consultative workshop conducted by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) held in Sydney on 30 November to discuss ‘the draft of the alternative model for safety and quality accreditation’, but more on this shortly.

November was a particularly important month for ACHS with a meeting of the Council, the annual general meeting and annual dinner. Dr Michael Hodgson AM was re-elected as President, Associate Professor Peter Woodruff was elected as Vice President and Mr John Smith was elected as Treasurer. Dr Noela Whitby AM did not seek reappointment as Vice President, a role which she performed with enthusiasm and great commitment for several years. She remains on the Board as a director.

At the Council meeting two specific issues were the subject of discussion. The first was the surveyor training and development program. The ACHS is in the process of seeking accreditation for this program and councillors provided valuable input. The second issue related to the relationship between indicators and accreditation. While this may seem to be something of a perennial issue, its importance is increasing given the interest expressed by the incoming Federal government in performance measurement and some of the recent work being undertaken, under the sponsorship of the ACSQHC.

The annual dinner was a great success particularly the highly entertaining, but of course thoughtful and relevant after dinner speech by Professor Cliff Hughes with its central theme of the importance of working together. Professor Hughes is well known for his railway analogies, but on this occasion he took one of his favourite topics to a new level of relevance and meaning.

The ACHS Medal was awarded to Professor William Rawlinson a distinguished virologist from the Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney. A feature on his very significant achievements appears elsewhere in this newsletter, along with details of winners of the quality improvement awards. The awards attracted a record 106 entries making it the largest national award of its type.

To mark 20 years of sponsorship of ACHS, Baxter Healthcare provided a special award for service to quality in the Australian health care system. The judging process resulted in this award being given to Ms. Christine Gee, National President of the Australian Private Hospitals Association.

Dr. Jon Mulligan, the previous President of ACHS was recognised as a life member on Council. This was a fitting tribute to Jon who has made a major contribution not only to our organisation, but across many parts of the health industry.

The evening included recognition of a number of ACHS staff whose contributions help to make us what we are. Dr Marjorie Pawsey and Mr Brian Lewis have both recently retired from ACHS. They have been an important part of the public image and played significant roles in defining the organisation.

Long serving staff members were also recognised. Mrs Margaret Jackson, Ms Julie...
Ings and Mrs Bernice Barbouttis have each given more than twenty years of invaluable service.

The recent Commission’s national workshop drew more than 150 participants. It discussed both the report to the Commission on the recent consultation process and the document entitled “An Alternative Model for Safety and Quality Accreditation – Draft”. The day took the form of three workshop sessions, the first two of which considered:

- Guiding principles for the alternative model
- Accreditation – minimising the risk of major systems failure

The third session was divided into four subject areas considered by four clusters:

- Achieving the outcomes – enforcement
- Addressing the needs of consumers
- Quality Improvement Framework
- Expanded scope of accreditation.

Implicit in each of the topics was acceptance of the proposed alternative model and the discussions focused more on the implementation and operational considerations. This approach appeared to have the tacit support of those present.

My view is that as our program, EQuiP, has evolved it has a strong alignment with the Commission’s proposed directions, although further adaptation may well be required. The Commission is committed to proposing a regulatory model, but interestingly there is uncertainty as to the level at which legislated regulation will be applied. Beyond requiring participation, self regulation has substantial support within the industry. It is believed that accreditation will become a mandatory requirement for health service providers.

The next step is for the Commission to finalise its proposal for consideration by Australian Health Ministers early next year.

The election of the new Australian Government comes at a time when many in the health industry and the wider community see the need for substantial changes and a redefining of the health systems priorities and direction. Whilst health issues did not dominate the election campaign funding, workforce, changing patterns of disease, dental health, chronic illness, mental health, population health, performance measurement and public engagement all came into focus. Quality is a theme that will run through all of these issues. They will influence the future evolution of standards and performance assessment activities and ACHS welcomes the opportunity to work with the industry in these areas.

Finally, planning is well advanced for the National Forum on Safety and Quality in Health Care to be held in Adelaide, 28 – 31 October, 2008. We are delighted that Professor Martin Marshall, now with the Health Foundation in England, will be one of the international speakers. He has been at the leading edge of research and policy formulation in the important areas of public reporting of performance information and clinical leadership. His contribution alone will ensure the conference reaches the highest standard.

I trust all of us have a wonderful Christmas and a very safe and happy holiday season. I look forward very much to continuing to work with you in 2008. With best wishes on behalf of the Board, Council and Staff.

Brian Johnston
Chief Executive

ACHS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

ACHS has a new Vice President with the election of Professor Peter Woodruff at the recent annual general meeting. Professor Woodruff is the Director of Vascular Surgery at the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Queensland and represents the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons on the ACHS Council. Most recently he served as the Treasurer for the ACHS Board.

Mr John Smith, Chief Executive of West Wimmera Health Service, who represents the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association on Council, was elected as the new Treasurer.

Dr Michael Hodgson AM was re-elected as the President. Dr Hodgson is a representative of the Australian Medical Association on the ACHS Council and has been a Board Member since 1999.

Dr Noela Whitby AM, Chair of Australian General Practice Accreditation Limited (AGPAL), who represents the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners on the Council, stepped down from the role as Vice President and remains on the ACHS Board.

The ACHS Board and Council are made up of representatives of stakeholder groups from within the health industry, including: medical colleges and associations; allied health professional colleges; State and Territory health authorities and a peak consumer representation body.

EQuiP 4 Update

The purpose of this update is to provide additional information which has now formed part of the EQuiP 4 Guide. We recommend that members print off the Update (accessible on the ACHS website via the link below) and keep it with their EQuiP 4 Guide.

Guidelines for the Management of Patients at Risk of Serious Self-harm and Suicide

The intent of this EQuiP Update is to provide guidance for services on managing consumers / patients at risk of serious self-harm, including suicide and for surveyors in assessing how mental health services manage this task. The assessment and management of risk is a core expectation of mental health services in order to ensure the safety of persons who may be at risk of serious self-harm, suicide or causing harm to others. At the same time, mental health services must provide a supportive and therapeutic environment conducive to patient recovery.

Within this update there are guidelines for mental health services on how to manage a person at risk of suicide in a health care organisation.

For the full update – follow the link provided: http://www.achs.org.au/EQuiP4Update/

Members are reminded to login to the ACHS website as the Update is in the restricted access section of the website.
The ACHS Annual Dinner was held on 22 November 2007 in Sydney for the ACHS Council and our stakeholders. Annually the ACHS presents a series of awards and a guest speaker addresses the gathering. In 2007 we were fortunate to have Professor Clifford Hughes AO, Chief Executive Officer of the NSW Clinical Excellence Commission address the audience and deliver an entertaining and insightful take on passion and teamwork in healthcare.

Lifetime member of ACHS Council

The dinner also provided the opportunity to recognise Dr Jon Mulligan as a lifetime member of the ACHS Council.

In May this year the ACHS Board decided to award this recognition, which is rarely given and reflects the considerable appreciation of Dr Mulligan’s contribution to the ACHS.

The decision was made in recognition of Dr Mulligan’s long and meritorious service particularly as a member and ultimately President of the Board from 2002 – 2005.

Previously a member of the Council (as the Australian Healthcare Association nominee) Dr Mulligan joined the ACHS Board in 1995.

During his time as President, the ACHS accreditation program significantly increased its focus on patient safety (including the introduction of mandatory criteria), consumer involvement and the publication of information. He also oversaw the revision of the organisation’s governance arrangements and guided the organisation’s establishment of its international business activities. Dr Mulligan led ACHS through this period with a diplomatic and considered approach and was a key factor in the effort to re-engage clinicians in accreditation.

Employee and surveyor recognition

In addition to thanking our retiring surveyors, the ACHS President took the opportunity at the 2007 Annual Dinner to thank several long serving employees of the ACHS.

Mrs Margaret Jackson, who has worked with the ACHS for 22 of the organisation’s 33 years was acknowledged. The ACHS was only 11 years old when Margaret joined and in this time she has contributed in a range of business services and administrative roles. She is currently the Project Assistant in the Development unit. However telling you about these roles does not even scratch the surface of Margaret’s contribution to the ACHS.

Dr Hodgson commented on Margaret’s work as the epitome of quality and professionalism. “Margaret’s knowledge of the organisation, her attention to detail and her tireless pursuit of ‘getting things right’ (when others just wanted to ‘get things done’) means she has helped to set and maintain a high standard of work in every team she has contributed to.”

Ms Julie Ings who joined the ACHS on 14 September 1987 and has worked with our Education Service throughout that time also received mention.

Julie joined as a part-time employee with the Education Advisory Service – which was set up in July of 1987 with a generous grant from Baxter Healthcare. The service provided for workshops or consultancies; specifically designed for individual public and private sector members.

At Julie’s recent 20 year celebration at the ACHS offices in Sydney, Margaret Jackson made reference to Julie’s ability to get things done quickly, quietly, properly and with a minimum of fuss.

The ACHS also acknowledged Mrs Bernice Barbouttis. Bernice joined the ACHS in a part-time role shortly after
Julie Ings on 16 December 1987. Bernice’s first role involved typing up survey reports with an electrical typewriter and Dr Hodgson commented that “chances are if you’re an accredited Australian healthcare organisation that Bernice has worked on your survey report.”

The ACHS Executive Manager, Customer Services, Ms Heather McDonald also recognised the contribution of Mr Brian Lewis to the organisation. Brian was a surveyor with the ACHS for six years, was a Council member, Treasurer, member of the Survey Committee and in 1991 won the ACHS Gold Medal – ACHS’ highest honour.

Dr Marjorie Pawsey
The Annual Dinner was also an opportunity to farewell Dr Marjorie Pawsey. The ACHS President acknowledged that the organisation would not be what it is today without Marjorie’s work.

Dr Pawsey has acted as the organisation’s Chief Executive, revolutionised our accreditation standards by leading the development and introduction of EQuIP and most recently steered the organisation’s research function.

While Marjorie will be taking time to spend with her grandchildren, we hope her input into the ACHS will continue, given her skills and knowledge in relation to quality and health accreditation in Australia.

MABEL Survey
Medicine in Australia: Balancing Employment and Life

The MABEL Survey will track a random stratified sample of around 15,000 doctors over an initial four year period. This will include GPs, private specialists, hospital doctors and doctors in specialist training. The first wave of the survey is planned for May 2008.

This landmark study is of an enormous national significance for the following reasons:
- The continuing medical workforce shortages across Australia and increasing demands on the working and family lives of doctors are unsustainable
- At the moment there is a lack of understanding of the decisions and trade-offs doctors make between their working and family lives throughout their career
- MABEL is the first longitudinal survey of doctors in Australia and will enable researchers to examine the effect of changes in circumstances on the balance between the professional and personal lives of doctors
- This study will provide important evidence relevant to the development of effective policies to support the medical workforce.

For more information visit the MABEL website: www.mabel.org.au

Contacts: enquiries@mabel.org.au

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Review of Standards for Mental Health Services

As many of you may be aware, the ACHS is currently reviewing the National Standards for Mental Health Services (NSMHS), under contract with the Commonwealth Department of Health & Ageing.

The field review of the draft revised NSMHS is now closed. The feedback is being collated and will be considered by the project Steering Group to inform any further changes to the revised NSMHS.

For the latest update on the project, please visit the ACHS website: http://www.achs.org.au/StndsMentalHealth
ACHS Awards 2007

ACHS Quality Improvement Awards 2007
Supported by Baxter Healthcare

Baxter

The 2007 Quality Improvement (QI) Award winners were recognised at this year’s ACHS Annual Dinner on Thursday 22 November 2007 in Sydney.

The Awards program was launched in 1996 and has been supported by Baxter Healthcare since 1998. The QI Awards are open to all members of ACHS quality improvement programs and aim to recognise outstanding achievement in activities, programs, projects and strategies in health care organisations.

Judging takes place annually during July and August. The panel consists of an ACHS Councillor, an ACHS Surveyor and a representative of an EQuIP member organisation. Judging of the QI Awards is always a difficult task given the consistently high standard of entries.

All of the QI Awards participants not only help raise the standard of health care but through sharing their work they encourage quality improvement initiatives beyond their own organisations.

The valuable ideas from entries are available for review in the Quality Initiatives 2007 publication, available from the ACHS website, http://www.achs.org.au/QIAwards2007. The publication includes the complete winning and highly commended entries and a summary of all the other projects submitted.

Notably in 2007 we received our first submission from an ACHS International member organisation; the Kerala Institute of Medical Sciences in India.

Above: Pictured from left to right back row: Kenneth Gray, Partner, Baker & McKenzie; Alison Hocking, Social Work, Peter Mac; Craig Bennett, CEO, Peter Mac; Jemimah Pentland, Corporate Relationship Manager, Peter Mac. Pictured from left to right front row: Hamlata Bhana, Social Work, Peter Mac; Elizabeth Ballinger, Head – Social Work, Peter Mac; Vanya Kumar, Associate, Baker & McKenzie.

Therese Kelly, Corporate Communications Manager for Baxter Healthcare presented the awards to the following recipients:

**Clinical Excellence and Patient Safety Category:**
*Royal Children’s Hospital – Melbourne for their submission Day Procedures for Children Requiring Lumbar Puncture and Bone Marrow Aspiration*

The project improved the service in order to reduce the overall anxiety, distress and pain felt by patients and their family members due to lumbar punctures and bone marrow procedures.

In addition to other initiatives music therapy is provided in the waiting room and special CDs have been produced for use in the procedure room to help reduce anxiety or boredom. The outcome is that children no longer require restraint for these procedures and are less fearful of coming to hospital.

**Non-Clinical Service Delivery Category:**
*Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Melbourne for their submission Cancer Patients’ Legal Assistant Program*

Pro bono lawyers for the Peter MacCallum Cancer Foundation, Baker & McKenzie, last year established a service for patients that require expert legal assistance falling outside the purview of Legal Aid, and who are not in a financial position to be able to employ professional services. They assist with matters including early access to superannuation, Powers of Attorney, insurance claims and unfair dismissal cases.

**Health Care Performance Indicators Category:**
*Hunter New England Health, Newcastle for their submission Pre Hospital Acute Triage: Translating Evidence Into Practice by Improving Patient Access to Acute Stroke Care*

The project developed an effective tool that can be used to determine the appropriateness of which patients should be taken directly to a centre that is capable of giving acute therapies.

The number of patients who received acute therapies was effectively tripled.

Jennie Jarvis, Executive Director of Nursing Services, Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne and Catherine Crock, Physician, Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne.
The ACHS Quality Initiatives publication also includes the winner of a joint award with the University of Newcastle.

The Faculty of Health requires the Bachelor of Medicine students to undertake study in patient safety and quality in health care. Students carry out a quality project in the hospital as part of their nine-week rotation in surgery and emergency. The aim is to identify a problem and apply the quality tools to determine causes and make recommendations.

**The winner for 2007 was:**

*Pre-transfusion requests: the (legally binding) pathology form*  
Burgess L, Williams M, Zawada KA

**Longstanding Service to Quality in Australian Healthcare**

The ACHS also took the opportunity of the annual dinner to recognise 20 years of commitment by Baxter Healthcare to quality improvement in the delivery of health services through ACHS initiatives.

Baxter and ACHS joined together to present a special award for 2007 for Longstanding Service to Quality in Australian Healthcare.

This special award was presented to Ms Christine Gee, Chief Executive Officer of Toowong Private Hospital and President of the Australian Private Hospitals Association. Ms Gee was nominated for her dedication and commitment to improving the quality and safety of Australian health care.

Dr Hodgson commented that Ms Gee is a person of credibility and persistence who had ensured the private hospital sector had become a key stakeholder in the national quality and safety agenda. As CEO for the past 10 years of Toowong Private Hospital, an acute private mental health service in Brisbane, Ms Gee was recognised for driving a culture of quality and safety and inspiring continuous improvement.

Her commitment, foresight and leadership have inspired a wide range of managers and clinicians through a career spanning over twenty years across the public and private acute care sectors.

Recipients for national awards tend to be nominated by their peers, in Christine’s case she was nominated by both her peers and the service coordinators in her own organisation.

Christine’s tireless participation in numerous working parties and review committees as well as her many current and previous national appointments were referred to. As the Chair of the former Private Health Industry Quality and Safety Committee, Christine drove the development and acceptance of the Private Sector Quality Criteria, which have been incorporated into general accreditation requirements. In this role she also oversaw a successful national trial of Drug Use Indicators in private hospitals and day facilities.

As CEO of Toowong Private Hospital, Christine is recognised for driving a culture of quality, safety and continuous improvement.

**ACHS Gold Medal 2007**

The ACHS Gold Medal, the highest award given by the ACHS Council, was presented to Professor David Davies on behalf of the recipient for 2007: **Professor William Rawlinson**, Head of the Virology Division, SEALS Microbiology at Prince of Wales Hospital and a professor at The University of New South Wales.

Dr Hodgson said Professor Rawlinson’s extensive list of achievements “could fill several lifetimes and careers” which made him a very worthy recipient of the award.

“Professor Rawlinson is renowned for his focus on the needs of patients, integrating new research findings into clinical and management areas, and the provision of improved quality assurance services to clinical laboratories,” Dr Hodgson said.

“He plays a significant role with various bodies who draft guidelines on control of viral gastroenteritis, respiratory diseases and vaccine introduction, as well as supervising services in influenza, avian influenza, HIV, HCV, sexually transmitted infections, antiviral resistance, and other molecular diagnostic virology.”

Professor Rawlinson provides health policy advice to health departments by chairing committees such as the NSW Health Blood-borne Viruses Advisory Panel, Commonwealth National Pathology Accreditation Advisory Council HIV/HCV Guidelines Committee, and the WHO Influenza Collaborating Centre Advisory Panel.
New Clinical Indicator Sets for 2008

Three indicator sets have been reviewed in 2007. All indicator sets have been endorsed by the respective College / Society.

Obstetrics Indicators Version 6

Version 5 of the Obstetrics indicators had been collected since 2004 and required review. The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) presented their suggestions and recommendations for a new indicator set to the ACHS. At the same time ACHS became aware of another group that was working on the development of some national obstetric indicators – the Core Maternity Indicator Project. The ACHS recognised that any revised ACHS obstetric indicators should align as closely as possible with any proposed national set. As a collector of indicators, the ACHS had been invited to participate in the discussions to develop the core maternity indicators by the Core Maternity Indicator project (CMIP). The ACHS acknowledged that the Australian Commission on Quality and Safety in Health Care was further progressing this initiative.

A joint meeting of the ACHS Obstetrics working party and the CMIP was convened to explore the areas of alignment across the two proposed sets. At the conclusion of the meeting there was a general consensus reached across a number of the indicators and the proposed new ACHS Obstetrics indicators reflect these areas of agreement.

The revised set retains some of the existing indicators as well as including a number of new indicators such as: Postpartum Haemorrhage/Blood Transfusion; Intrauterine Growth Retardation (IUGR); Peer review of Specified Adverse Events; Antibiotic Prophylaxis & Caesarean Section and Thromboprophylaxis & Caesarean Section.

Rehabilitation Medicine Indicators Version 4

Version 3 of the Rehabilitation indicators has been collected since 2002 and required review.

A number of changes to the Version 3 indicators were recommended by the indicator working party, including a change to

WHO ‘Clean Care is Safer Care’ NewsAlert


Coming soon…

EAT 4 smart client functionality

The purpose of the Electronic Assessment Tool 4 (EAT 4) smart client is to give users the option to work offline.

The EAT 4 smart client is currently in the final stages of testing at the ACHS and is scheduled for pilot testing in the first quarter of 2008. If you would like to participate in the pilot tests, please email your request to it@achs.org.au by 31 December 2007 and we will be in touch.

Thank you for your interest.
The ACHS annual report on clinical indicator data for Australasia (1998 – 2006) is now available. 681 health care organisations (HCOs) submitted data to the Clinical Indicator program over the nine year period with almost equal representation from public and private sector organisations. The clinical indicator program covers a wide range of clinical areas from the reporting of aggregate rates of patient falls and pressure ulcers to specific measures such as the rate of complications after radiology procedures.

The purpose of the Report is for health care organisations to identify areas of difference to the national results, investigate reasons and make improvements if required.

A particularly encouraging trend is the increase in the number of health care organisations participating in this voluntary program and the increasing number of indicators that each organisation chooses to measure and submit.

Another trend that emerges more clearly given the nine years of data is that most health care organisations have areas where they perform above the average as well as areas where improvement may be required.


The printed Executive Summary of the Report (which includes a CD ROM of the full Report) has been mailed to ACHS Members, Surveyors, Councillors and other stakeholders. If you would like to receive a hard copy please email: communications@achs.org.au

Conferences and events

Quality Carnivale
Registration is now open for the QIP/AGPAL 4th International Conference in Primary Health Care, 17–19 April 2008, Grand Hyatt Melbourne.

Register online via this link:
For more information, visit:

6th Australasian Conference on Safety and Quality in Health Care
Bold Aims – Bold Outcomes
1-3 September 2008.
Christchurch Convention Centre, New Zealand.
The Australasian Association for Quality in Health Care (AAQHC) has announced two keynote speakers for the Conference on Safety and Quality in Health Care:

Charles Vincent
Since 1985 he has carried out research on the causes of harm to patients, the consequences for patients and staff and methods of prevention. He established the Clinical Risk Unit at University College in 1995 and now directs the Clinical Safety Research Unit based in Department of Bio-Surgery and Surgical Technology, Imperial College London.


Davis Balestracci
Davis is a regular presenter at the prestigious Institute for Healthcare Improvement United States and European annual forums.

Davis has a B.S. degree in chemical engineering, an M.S. degree in statistics, yet describes himself as a “right-brained” statistician.

He has consulted and given seminars in Canada, Palestine, Israel, Norway, Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, Wales, and, over 100 hospitals in England through the sponsorship of the National Health Service’s Modernisation Agency.

For more information about the speakers and the 2008 conference, email helen@conference.co.nz or visit www.aaqhc.org.au

National Forum 2008:
Safety and Quality is Everyone’s Business

National Forum on Safety and Quality in Health Care

International keynote speaker announced:
Professor Martin Marshall
We are delighted to announce that Professor Martin Marshall, the Director of Clinical Quality for the UK’s Health Foundation will be one of our international keynote speakers. Martin’s expertise in clinical quality is extensive having acted as an expert advisor to (among others) the Healthcare Commission, the Modernisation Agency, the National Patient Safety Agency, and the National Primary Care Collaborative.

To register to receive updates on the Forum, please visit our website: www.achs.org.au

Call for Abstracts
The Call for Abstracts is open and abstracts are invited for all topics related to the following themes:

• Workforce
• Evidence into Practice
• Knowledge and Information Management
• Governance and Accountability.

This Forum will be hosted by the ACHS in collaboration with the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care and the Department of Health SA.

To access the Call for Abstracts visit:

RACMA’s Annual Scientific Meeting
In conjunction with the Forum, the Royal Australian College of Medical Administrators will host its Annual Scientific Meeting including its annual general meeting, fellowship graduation and Langford Oration.