



# APHA Vital Signs

23 August 2009

## Chemotherapy Budget Measure

Health Minister Nicola Roxon announced Thursday that she will further delay the introduction of the measure from last year's budget that would have seen patients being forced to either pay hundreds of dollars for chemotherapy treatment or go onto a public hospital waiting list for treatment.

APHA has worked as a member of an alliance of cancer patient groups, cancer physicians, and pharmacists to persuade Minister and her Department that the original measure, announced with no forewarning or consultation, was badly flawed and would result in large additional costs to private hospitals and, ultimately, patients. The Minister has said she will now discuss the measure in the context of the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement. That is understood to mean the budget measure will not be introduced, if at all, before July 2010, and in a very different form.

## PHIAC Stats Released Last Week

The latest quarterly private health insurance statistics have been released by the Private Health Insurance Administration Council (PHIAC). The statistics show that more people than ever before have private health insurance, and that private hospitals are now seeing twice as many insured episodes than they were ten years ago.

The statistics show that private the number of people with private health insurance has risen to 9,745,242 people, which is 0.4% higher than the previous quarter. The proportion of the population covered has remained the same at 44.6% but there continues to be trend of people taking out or downgrading to policies that require either a member excess or co-payment towards the cost of treatment. Hospital treatment policies with no excess or co-payment now only make up 26% of all policies, compared to 45% of all policies in 2001.

APHA Members should have received an information paper outlining the data. If you have not received a copy, please contact Marie McCoy at [marie.mccoy@apha.org.au](mailto:marie.mccoy@apha.org.au).

## Influenza Discussion Paper

Healthcare workers are often exposed to the influenza virus during the course of their work, contributing to substantial rates of infection during the influenza season. In fact, it has been estimated that up to 25% of healthcare workers can contract influenza during any given season.

The Influenza Specialists Group (ISG) has produced a discussion paper on "Influenza vaccination among healthcare workers" which is available from their website at <http://www.influenzaspecialistgroup.org.au/content/view/46/1/>

The ISG consists of medical and scientific specialists and includes representatives of professional and patient groups from around the country. It works in conjunction with key Australian professional and consumer groups and also with the Australian Federal, State and Territory departments of Health in their educational activities regarding influenza and its prevention.

## ACHS EQUIP 4 Review

Last week, the APHA Safety & Quality Taskforce met with ACHS to provide detailed feedback on

proposed revisions to the EQulP 4 standards. It is understood the revised draft standards will be open for field review on Monday 24 August. APHA encourages all members to provide comments as part of the field review. Members can find more information on the field review at [www.achs.org.au/EQulP4review/](http://www.achs.org.au/EQulP4review/). APHA will provide further information to members in relation to the review process in the near future.

## APHA Launches New Website

APHA has launched their new website, [www.apha.org.au](http://www.apha.org.au) which has a number of new features including a jobs board for member hospitals to post employment vacancies, a find a hospital feature for the public looking for a private hospital in their area and an improved member area with information on Safety and Quality initiatives, the National Procedure Banding Schedule and more. Usernames and passwords were emailed to members last Thursday. If you have not received one and/or would like access to the member only area of the website, please email Lisa Ramshaw at [lisa.ramshaw@apha.org.au](mailto:lisa.ramshaw@apha.org.au)

## Surgical Safety Checklist Launched

CEO Michael Roff represented APHA at the launch by Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon of the Surgical Safety Checklist last week at Parliament House in Canberra. Effective and potentially life saving – the Surgical Safety Checklist is a safe guard that will improve quality of care for Australian patients. The Checklist will provide surgeons with a standardised series of questions to minimise “adverse events”.

The Checklist will ask:

- is it the correct patient;
- is it the correct site; and
- is the instrument, needle and sponge count correct after the operation.

It also ensures the entire surgical team introduce themselves by name and role before the operation starts in order to open the lines of communication and clarify roles. Research has found that use of a checklist can almost halve the rate of death from 1.5 per cent to 0.8 per cent. Minimising avoidable injury and death will reduce the human cost of hospital errors and have a major impact on not just the financial cost of readmissions and longer hospital stays.

The Checklist is based on the World Health Organization’s Surgical Safety Checklist and has been adapted for Australian conditions.