



Australian Government

National Health and Medical Research Council

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care



## Media Release

# Joint guideline update ensures best available evidence for the prevention and control of infection in healthcare

30 May 2018

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), in partnership with the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission), today released the *Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare (2019)*.

Each year there are over 165,000 healthcare associated infections (HAIs) in Australian acute healthcare facilities<sup>1</sup>, making them the most common complication for hospital patients.

The revised guidelines use new national and international evidence to strengthen the risk management approach to infection and prevention control established in the 2010 guidelines.

“The guidelines are one of NHMRC’s most frequently requested resources. They are used every day by clinicians in all healthcare environments to help develop protocols and inform policy at the state and territory level,” said NHMRC CEO Professor Anne Kelso AO.

Infection control is an issue that does not just affect patients and workers in hospitals — infections can occur in all healthcare settings, including office-based practices and ambulance services.

“Healthcare associated infections are an important issue for patient safety,” said the Commission’s CEO Adjunct Professor Debora Picone AO. “They are one of the most common complications affecting hospital patients, and greatly increase morbidity and mortality, as well as the risk of readmission.

“Effective infection prevention and control is central to providing high quality healthcare for patients and a safe working environment for healthcare workers. These guidelines support the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standard Preventing and Controlling Healthcare-Associated Infections<sup>2</sup>,” said Professor Picone.

NHMRC has used a rigorous and comprehensive approach to updating the guidelines to ensure that they reflect the best available evidence and expert opinion on infection prevention and control. There was also significant consultation by NHMRC and the Commission, particularly with the states and territories, to address a diverse range of healthcare policy needs.

“The guidelines provide a nationally accepted approach to infection prevention and control, focusing on core principles and priority areas for action. They provide a basis for healthcare workers and healthcare facilities to develop local protocols and processes for infection prevention and control,” said Professor Kelso.

“Importantly, the guidelines have a risk management focus, encouraging clinicians to think about the infection risk of each situation and adapt practice accordingly. There is also greater emphasis in the revised guidelines on better management and surveillance of multi-resistant organisms, in line with global calls for this to be a public health priority.”

Key elements addressed in the 2019 guidelines include: the importance of a patient-centred approach, disinfection methods, antimicrobial resistance, replacement of peripheral intravenous catheters, use of chlorhexidine, immunisation for healthcare workers, Norovirus and use of hospital-grade disinfectants.

Revision of the guidelines reflects a strategic Australian government priority to translate high quality research into advice that will improve Australian clinical care, health policy and health systems.

The NHMRC Infection Control Guidelines Advisory Committee provided oversight and expert advice on updating the guidelines.

[The 2019 guidelines can be downloaded here.](#)

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<sup>i</sup> Mitchell BG, Shaban RZ, MacBeth D, Wood C-J, Russo PL: The burden of healthcare-associated infection in Australian hospitals: A systematic review of the literature. *Infection, Disease & Health*; Volume 22, Issue 3, Pages 117–128 (2017).

<sup>ii</sup> Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, *National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (second edition)*, 3: Preventing and Controlling Healthcare-Associated Infection Standard, <https://nationalstandards.safetyandquality.gov.au>