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Conference Report

NSW OTA Conference Grant – Professional Education

Conference attended

American College of Surgeons Quality and Safety Conference
July 19-22, 2019
Walter E. Washington Convention Center
Washington D.C, USA

Background

The National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (NSQIP) is a global quality improvement program developed and administered by the American College of Surgeons (ACS). The aim of program is to improve surgical outcomes for patients, thereby decreasing the cost of surgical complications to both patient and the healthcare facility. The program collects pre, intra and post-operative data for a random selection of patients, as well as following each patient for 30 days after their surgery in order to identify any surgical complications that may have occurred after discharge from hospital. In NSW, the program is partly funded by NSW Health's Agency for Clinical Innovation. Prince of Wales Hospital on-boarded the program as a Phase 2 pilot site in 2018. The Surgeon Champion (SC) and Surgical Clinical Reviewer (SCR) are the two core program roles at each participating site.

The strength of NSQIP lies in the reliability of the data. Every 3 months, each participating site receives risk-adjusted statistical results of the data that has been abstracted, collected and entered into the NSQIP Registry by the SCR. This analysis of data provides an overview of the quality of care provided by the surgical service at each participating site, as well as providing a benchmark with other hospitals of similar size and acuity around the world. Through detailed study of the reports provided by the ACS, the comparative outcome statistics guide each hospital to areas for quality and process improvements. Ongoing data abstraction/collection by SCRs allows for monitoring the effectiveness of quality improvement measures. This continuous cycle of assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating enables hospitals to provide best practice surgical services as well as care that responds to and addresses needs identified by the data.

Surgical Clinical Reviewer (SCR)

While NSQIP is an established global quality improvement program heading into its 3rd decade, the program is relatively new in Australia. The SCR is a very unique role within NSW Health. As a nurse with a Perioperative and Nursing Education background, as well as a desire to provide a continuously high quality of care to patients undergoing surgery, the opportunity to take on the SCR role at POWH is essentially my dream come true! My experience in Operating Theatre Nursing opened the door to

the SCR secondment opportunity. Like all Operating Theatre Nurses, providing a high quality of care for surgical patients forms the basis of my work ethic. The network of NSQIP affiliated hospitals in NSW and now Vic and QLD is small but growing, as is the group of highly experienced healthcare professionals that make up the Australian Surgical Clinical Reviewer team. In less than 12 months the team has more than doubled!

The Conference

In conjunction with online training, podcasts, program conference calls, monthly education sessions, and annual certification, the American College of Surgeons Quality and Safety Conference is an essential component of education and training for the SCR. Given the geographical location of Australia, the sheer distance (including time differences) between other participating sites often means we in Australia work in relative isolation. The annual conference provides invaluable opportunities to meet with, listen to and speak with SCRs and other professionals in the NSQIP global community. The conference offers education sessions specifically for the SCRs as well as providing the opportunity to learn about and learn from established NSQIP programs, and hear how the program has directly improved surgical care for patients worldwide.

The theme of the 2019 American College of Surgeons Quality and Safety Conference was “Putting our Patients First”. I feel that this theme, quite literally, encapsulates the core of NSQIP. The program analyses individual patient data (de-identified and with ethics and governance approval), risk factors and surgical outcomes in order to drive improvements in quality of surgical care. In July this year, a contingent of Australian healthcare professionals, including Surgeon Champions, Surgical Clinical Reviewers, and Taskforce Manager from NSW ACI converged in Washington DC for the ACS Quality and Safety Conference. With over 2200 attendees, the Walter E. Washington Convention Center and its powerful air conditioning provided welcome relief from the exceptionally humid North American summer.

The grant I received from NSW OTA enabled payment of the Conference Registration fee, including attendance at the pre-conference workshop where Quality Improvement methodologies were discussed. My objectives in attending the conference were to further develop my knowledge and understanding of the data analysis methodology used within ACS NSQIP and to demonstrate how the practical application of data analysis can inform future quality improvement initiatives at Prince of Wales Hospital. Further to these objectives, I planned to attend education sessions that would empower my role as SCR to make a positive impact on surgical patient outcomes. I carefully chose specific topics in breakout sessions of the conference that provided education on data analysis, Quality Improvement methodology and prioritising patient care through effective communication.

One of the most poignant moments of the conference was listening to the keynote speaker, who’s personal and professional experiences inspired the audience to keep striving for the best for our patients. Dr Rana Awdish, an Intensive Care Physician at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit (Michigan, USA) shared her amazing journey from death to recovery, lessons learned from being both a physician and a patient, and how these experiences have shaped her passion for improving the patient experience. Indeed, her memoir titled *‘In Shock: My Journey from Death to Recovery and the Redemptive Power of Hope’* is highly recommended.

Below is an outline of sessions attended at the Conference, as well as some of the educational and professional benefits gained from Conference attendance.

Day 1:

- QI methodology: The Basics
- Value Improvement in Surgery
- Leadership: Do We Need More Leaders? Yes!
- The Value Equation
- ACS NSQIP Adult Quality Program Social

Day 2:

- Important topics for Quality, Safety, and Value in Surgery
- ACS NSQIP Adult and ACS NSQIP Pediatric Surgical Clinical Reviewer Trivia
- Keynote address – Dr Rana Awdish
- NSQIP statistics
- Welcome Reception

Day 3:

- ACS NSQIP Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary (HPB) Collaborative meeting
- Data Integrity
- Australian contingent (NSW Collaborative) meeting
- Making Patients a Priority Through Better Communication
- Surgical Pot Pourri
- Abstract Poster Reception

Day 4:

- Enhancing Communication and Teamwork to Improve Quality
- Opiates in 2019: A Continuing Crisis
- Closing

Educational benefits:

- The concept of standardisation as a means to improve quality of patient care was a common thread of many sessions. Salient point – standardisation is effective only when implementation and compliance is effective. Success of standardisation (and therefore improved quality of patient care) requires ongoing teamwork and effective communication.
- Understanding of the basics of Quality Improvement methodology.
- HPB Collaborative meeting provided in depth information on the purpose and future direction of the collaboration.
- Understanding of how to extract meaning from the Semi Annual Report (SAR), as well as an insight into the methodology used by ACS in their data analysis.
- Interactive session focused on clinical data abstraction provided lively forum for SCRs to practice and develop abstraction skills, discuss allocation of specific variables/occurrences, and participate in group work.

Professional development benefits:

- Opportunity to speak with other SCRs about the differences and development of the role in different healthcare facilities.
- Time spent with SCRs allowed for discussion of differing aspects of the SCR role, which prompted further discussion around the development of the role in the context of Australian healthcare system.
- Attendance at the various events provided an opportunity to meet ACS staff and others involved in NSQIP.
- The NSW Collaborative meeting provided invaluable time together for Australian participants. Discussion of the present and future direction of NSQIP/NSQIP Pediatrics in Australia gave added meaning and context to the autonomous SCR role.
- Discussion with other SCRs regarding intricacies of the role has given much 'food for thought' regarding efficiency in daily workflow.

As a nurse currently working in the seconded role of Surgical Clinical Reviewer, this unique experience has opened my eyes to the possibilities within the nursing profession. Having the opportunity to work in this role as a Clinical Nurse Specialist has given me the chance to utilise specialist theatre knowledge as well as foundational nursing knowledge. I thank you for your assistance in making my attendance at the ACS Quality and Safety Conference in July 2019 a reality. It was a truly special gift to spend time with other participants of NSQIP, as well as building our Australian presence at such a large international event.