

Improving intensive care... ...learning from experience for the benefit of future patients

Ensuring high quality intensive care

It is important that all intensive care patients receive the highest quality care. To help do this, this intensive care unit is regularly assessed by an independent, charitable organisation. Information (or data) on every patient admitted to the unit is collected by unit staff and sent to this organisation. The organisation confidentially analyses the data and sends the results back to the unit. The health care team in this unit can use these results to improve the care they give their patients. This process is called an audit.

This particular audit is called the Case Mix Programme. The Government recommends that all intensive care units take part in the Case Mix Programme because it is vital for units to have independent feedback so they can improve patient care. Units voluntarily sign up to be part of the Case Mix Programme. Those that take part are keen to improve the standards of care they give.

What information is collected about patients?

- **When** the patient was admitted to the unit and where from (e.g. ward, emergency department etc.)
- **Why** the patient needed intensive care
- **What** treatment was given and the results of the treatment
- **When** the patient left the unit and where they went next (e.g. ward, home etc.)

No names or addresses are collected.

Who collects this information?

A trained member of staff from this unit, sometimes called an audit clerk, collects the information about each patient and enters it onto a computer.

How is the information used?

The information collected by the audit clerk in each unit is sent to an independent charitable organisation called ICNARC (Intensive Care National Audit & Research Centre). ICNARC brings together and analyses data from units across the

UK. When they have finished the analysis, they send out a confidential report to each unit. This report shows how each intensive care unit compares with similar units in the UK in terms of the care it provides and the results (or outcomes) of this care.

How secure is the information?

ICNARC has a very secure computer system and a strict information security policy that has been approved by the Department of Health's Confidentiality Advisory Group (CAG) within the Health Research Authority (HRA). As part of this policy, all staff sign a contract agreeing to keep data secure and confidential. ICNARC is also registered under the Data Protection Act.

Can patients refuse to give this information?

Yes. If you don't want information about your care to be used, you have the right to request that it isn't sent to ICNARC. If, as relatives, you are concerned that the patient would not want this information used (but the patient is unable to say so themselves), you should discuss this with a member of the health care team in this unit. This will not affect the care and treatment the patient is given.

If you have any concerns about how information on patients is used for the Case Mix Programme, please discuss it with a member of the health care team in this unit.