

Term Changeover - Ensuring an effective handover of patient care

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Summary Guidelines to ensure that patient care and patient flow are maintained by clinical teams during end of term changeover for junior medical staff and registrars.

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Summary

Guidelines to ensure that patient care and patient flow are maintained by clinical teams during end of term changeover for junior medical staff and registrars.

Responsibility

This applies to all Registrars, Resident Medical Officers and Interns working within NSW public health services.

Term Dates

The starting dates and term dates for the Clinical Year will be circulated to all agencies involved in the training and oversight of Registrars, Resident Medical Officers and Interns working within NSW public health services. These dates will be circulated yearly with significant warning to allow for planning and scheduling.

Background

- During the clinical year, there are a number of term changeovers which involve junior medical staff moving from their current clinical rotation to their next placement. During these changeovers, junior medical staff may move to:
 - a different rotation but within the same hospital
 - a different hospital in the same geographical location
 - a hospital in a different geographical location.
- The changeover period extends from the last day of one term (Friday) to the first day of the new term (Monday).
- The turnover of junior medical staff can, if not managed well, disrupt the continuity of patient care and patient flow.
- It is important that health services have guidelines in place to assist staff in managing the term changeover period.

Other relevant resources

- This procedure should be considered in conjunction with the AMA Safe handover: Safe Patients Guidance on Clinical Handover for Clinicians and Managers ¹
- Also useful is an article in the MJA in April 2007 entitled What do Junior Doctors want in start-of-term orientation? ²

Procedures

Health Services should have in place guidelines that incorporate the following key points and all staff should be oriented regarding discharge procedures during the end of term handover period:

- The most important aspect of good term changeover / handover is that relevant JMO and registrar staff talk to each other regarding handover of the patients requiring care during this time.

¹ AMA Safe handover: Safe Patients Guidance on Clinical Handover for Clinicians and Managers, Australian Medical Association 2006. www.ama.com.au

² What do Junior Doctors want in start-of-term orientation? MJA, Vol 186 No.7 April 2007

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- All patients identified for discharge during the changeover period will have discharge preparations, as far as is possible, completed on the Friday prior to changeover by the outgoing medical team. This will include discharge summaries, discharge scripts, letters to GPs, appointments etc.
- A clear documented medical management plan will be recorded in the patient medical record, which will include the instructions for discharge during the changeover period.
- The new team must check the draft discharge summary and medications prior to discharge so that changes occurring over the weekend can be incorporated.
- Any patient not being discharged during the changeover period will require a Medical Management plan (or equivalent) to be documented in the medical record on the Friday preceding the changeover day.
- Local arrangements should be put in place to manage other contingencies that may affect the term changeover such as:
 - Requests for leave for junior medical staff (Interns, RMOs and Registrars) during the period immediately preceding, during and following term changeover.
 - Early activation of discharge of patients or transfer of patients.

Benefits

- Greater continuity of patient care.
- Early identification of expected discharges will ensure patients and staff are aware of all patient discharge plans and the outgoing Medical Teams complete all discharge documentation. This will facilitate access to the inpatient beds earlier in the day.
- A clear documented medical management plan will ensure a smooth transition of care from outgoing to incoming Medical Teams for all inpatients.
- Review of demand will see a planned response to activity levels initiated on the Friday preceding the changeover day.
- Reduction in Access Block.
- Sustained patient flow throughout the facilities.

Acknowledgement

In completion of these guidelines, IMET acknowledges use of the Sydney West Area Health Service business rule on patient management during Registrars' and Resident Medical Officers' changeover.

Professor Debora Picone AM
Director-General

Appendix 1

Term Dates

NSW Health require IMET to circulate JMO and Registrar term dates yearly at a predetermined date to all parties concerned.

The starting date for Clinical Year 2009 is **Monday, 19 January 2009.**

5 TERM YEAR (For interns and most residents)

Orientation	12 January 2009	18 January	1 week
Term 1	19 January 2009	29 March 2009	10 weeks
Term 2	30 March 2009	14 June 2009	11 weeks
Term 3	15 June 2009	23 August 2009	10 weeks
Term 4	24 August 2009	1 November 2009	10 weeks
Term 5	2 November 2009	17 January 2010	11 weeks

4 TERM YEAR (For most registrars)

Term 1	19 January 2009	19 April 2009	13 weeks
Term 2	20 April 2009	19 July 2009	13 weeks
Term 3	20 July 2009	18 October 2009	13 weeks
Term 4	19 October 2009	17 January 2010	13 weeks