

NOTES

The British Thoracic Society (BTS) has developed a database as a tool to support audit of hospital management of acute severe asthma. Based on the findings of the national audit of management of acute asthma in adults (March issue, p 24), the database consists of eight items relating to assessment, hospital management, and discharge planning. Important criteria in choosing each item were the likely availability of data in hospital case notes and the clinical relevance of items – they all relate to specific recommendations in the BTS guidelines for acute asthma management.

The BTS invites local hospitals to send in data on their current practice in managing acute severe asthma. A single A4 data collection sheet is accompanied by specific instructions, to ensure uniformity of the data collected, and a short form seeking background information on the sampling method and hospital.

Participating hospitals will receive their own results in comparison with current data in the database, using box and whisker plots to show the middle 50% and range of responses throughout the country. There is a pledge to provide such feedback within a month of receipt of data so that an audit cycle could be completed before junior and middle grade staff rotate onwards. Ultimately the data in the database will complement the guidelines review process. The data will also inform the review of guidelines with the aim of improving standards of care. Copies of the tool and further information are available from Ms Ida Ryland, Asthma Audit Office, Aintree Chest Centre, Fazakerley Hospital, Lower Lane, Liverpool L9 7AL. The database is funded from Department of Health Central Audit Funds.

The organisers of the Golden Helix Award are calling for applications for 1995–6 (see Diary section and loose insert).

This is the fourth year the award scheme has operated across Europe, and the top teams' work is impressive (limited numbers of copies of selected summaries from the top projects for the past three years, with contact details, are available in local language and English). The judges are constantly looking for more "cutting edge" projects. About 80 healthcare organisations serve on the boards of the award across nine countries, and a director, president, or chairman sits on the management board and judging panel, thus ensuring a high level of support for the award and of visibility for the teams who apply. National judging takes place in the local language. The nine boards are UK/Ireland, Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands, Iberia, Belgium, Switzerland, and the Nordic countries (literature is available in the local language). The national winners compete for the overall European prize, when judging is in English.

The judges are looking for quality improvement projects in any aspect of health care, including public and private sectors, specifically projects that show initiative and innovation and significantly improve a process in the team's work. Claims of improvement must be substantiated with solid data taken at the start of the project and again at completion and be focused on "customers." Further factors taken into account are whether the project has made a significant impact on its own department/organisation and whether it has the potential to be applied elsewhere in Europe and make a notable impact.

Those with a project for submission or who are thinking of starting a project now should contact the appropriate award manager for an application pack and guide which gives details on how to apply (see diary).

DIARY

27 November

London: Royal College of Physicians of London. Hospitals without beds? Innovations in outpatient and ambulatory care. North Thames Regional Health Authority one day conference to review current understanding of outpatient services, explore examples of innovation, and highlight the implications for the Department of Health; NHS; royal colleges and faculties; and nurses, patients, and carers. (£100.) Application forms and further details from Ms Vicki Greenway, NTRHA, 40 Eastbourne Terrace, London W2 3QR (fax 0171 725 5532).

30 November

The Golden Helix Award for Quality in European Healthcare. Deadline for applications (see also entry in Notes and loose insert in this issue). For more information, application pack, and guide, please contact (UK): The Golden Helix Award Manager, Healthcare Group, Hewlett-Packard Limited, Cain Road, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1HN (tel +44(0)1344) 36 92 69; fax +44(0)1344) 36 10 51) (continental Europe): The Golden Helix Award Manager, Medical Products Group, Hewlett-Packard GmbH, Schickardstrasse 3, 71034 Böblingen, Germany (tel +49(0)7031) 14 45 39; fax +49(0)7031) 14 23 46).

30 November

13th International Conference of the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQA), May 26–31, 1996. Deadline for abstracts. Further information from the Secretariat, ISAS International Seminars, PO Box 574, Jerusalem 91004, Israel (tel 972-2-6520574; fax 972-2-6520558).

1–2 December

Maastricht, Netherlands: Exhibition and Congress Centre. Networking for quality. Second international EUROQUAN conference on quality and working practice. Main themes: networking; patient in-

volvement; guidelines, protocols, and standards. Further information from Karen Waterman, Conference Manager, Networking for Quality, Viking House, 17–19 Peterborough Road, Harrow, Middlesex AA1 2AX, UK (fax +44(0) 181 423 4302).

7–9 March 1996

London: Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre. Bringing quality improvement to the heart of European health care. First European Forum on Quality Improvement in Health Care. Comprising plenary lectures, seminars and workshops, and short courses, the forum is aimed at doctors, nurses, other health professionals, health care leaders, policy workers, researchers, and patients' representatives and will explore in a very practical way methods of improving patient care. Main themes: continual quality improvement, patient orientation, leadership and managing organisational change, improving quality and reducing cost, measurement, professional education for quality. Further information from Clare Moloney, Conference Unit, BMA, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP (tel +44(0) 171 383 6478; fax +44(0) 171 383 6663; email 100632.1404@compuserve.com).

First European Forum on Quality Improvement in Health Care Exhibition 7–9 March 1995

To complement this important forum there will be a major exhibition. There are also numerous openings for sponsorship partnerships and promotional packages, which can be negotiated to suit both large and small scale budgets. Analysis of over 250 delegate inquiries to date disclose a high level of interest from directors, senior managers, and researchers from the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States.

Further information from Carol Gill, Marketing Executive, Conference Unit, British Medical Association, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP (tel +44(0)171 383 6381; fax +44(0)171 383 6663).

Correction

An error occurred in the first editorial (March, p 1). Reference 1 should have been given as: Clinical Resources and Audit Group and Scottish Office. *Clinical outcome indicators*. Edinburgh: CRAG 1994. The editor apologises for this editorial error.