



# Clinical Pathways:

*A GUIDE FOR CLINICIANS*

The Royal Children's Hospital  
Melbourne, Australia

*This guide is intended for use within The Royal Children's Hospital as a tool for clinicians using, developing and reviewing Clinical Pathways.*

Written by: Justin King

Version 1.1

Last Updated: November 2004

**For more information, contact:**

Care Coordination Manager

Clinical Support Services

The Royal Children's Hospital

Flemington Rd, Parkville

Victoria, Australia 3052

Web: [http://www.rch.org.au/rch\\_clinpath](http://www.rch.org.au/rch_clinpath)

### *What is a Clinical Pathway?*

A Clinical Pathway is a plan of care, drafted in advance for predictable patient groups which is developed and used by multidisciplinary team. It forms part of the written documentation, includes outcomes to be achieved and the capacity for recording and analysing variance.

### *Why does the Royal Children's Hospital use Clinical Pathways?*

The Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) is committed to providing patients and their families with coordinated, standardised, evidence based care. This care should be clearly documented, and the information collected should be used for monitoring and improving performance. Clinical Pathways are a tool used to achieve all of these aims.

### *Who is involved & what do they have to do?*

**Care Coordination Manager-** The Care Coordination Manager provides advice on the Clinical Pathway review and development process. They also monitor the utilization of the pathways and maintain the clinical pathways section of the RCH website. Care Coordination Manager works in Clinical Support Services and is available on extension and pager 6956.

**Clinical Pathway Manager-** Each ward/department must have a Clinical Pathway Manager, who will oversee the review and development of Clinical Pathways in that area. They must ensure that all paths have been reviewed within the last 2 years, and that the development and review of clinical paths is thorough, following the outlined process. They are also responsible for ensuring all staff in their area are aware what Clinical Pathways are available and how they are used.

Ward Nursing Staff- Each Clinical Pathway must have at least one clinical staff member allocated. This person is responsible for developing and reviewing the Clinical Pathway, and ensuring content reflects best practice at all times.

Medical Staff- To document using Clinical Pathways where required. To participate in the development and review Clinical Pathways, and give authorisation for use where required.

Allied Health Staff - To document using Clinical Pathways where required. To participate in the development and review Clinical Pathways

Ward Clerks- To assist with the printing of Clinical Pathways, and to file in the Medical Record where required.



## *How do I develop a new clinical pathway?*

Before developing a Clinical Pathway, it is necessary to determine if this patient group is suitable. Patient groups which suit the Clinical Pathway model are those patients who follow a predictable course

### *Determine if it is Appropriate*

The most important issue, when determining if a particular patient group is suited to pathway implementation is that there is some form of pattern to their episode(s) of care, and that there is a well defined patient population

In surgical cases, this may mean that the patients have their surgical procedure, then stay for a particular number of days. For a medical case, this may mean that they follow particular phases in their recovery, or the management changes at distinct points. It is not necessary to restrict the time over which the path lasts, or restrict it to one inpatient stay. Pathway methodology can also be used for patients in the community, rehabilitation or palliation.

### *Speak with your Unit Manager / Department Manager*

Ensuring that you have support from your Unit Manager is an important step. You may need some time away from the ward area to spend developing the path, which the Unit Manager may be able to provide. This could also be a good time to speak with the doctors/surgeons involved and any other allied health members who will have a significant input into the path.

### *Contact Care Coordination Manager*

Speak with the Care Coordination Manager so that they can meet with you and discuss each of the steps involved. The Care Coordination Manager should be able to provide you with all the support you need to help you through the process.

### *Follow the RCH Clinical Path Development / Review Plan*

This will provide you with a list of all the steps involved, with provision for setting dates, which can be very important to stay on track. There is also a guide for the review of histories in the development of paths.

The plan must be discussed with the Care Coordination Manager before any work commences. The development / review checklist is available from

[http://www.rch.org.au/rch\\_clinpath](http://www.rch.org.au/rch_clinpath)



### *What happens then?*

Once a new or reviewed pathway has been implemented, the team needs to make sure that it is being used, and that the content is up to date. This can be done by observing staff practice, and reminding them to use and complete pathways. The team should be constantly assessing the literature for new evidence, and the intranet for new guidelines and policies.

### *How do I stay in touch with the evidence?*

When a clinical pathway is reviewed or developed, the library will set up an 'OVID auto-alert' which will email the references of the latest journal articles to the staff member who completed the review. You can also do your own research between reviews on the internet as well as online databases.

### *How do I keep staff up to date?*

It is important to ensure that staff are aware of how to use the pathway and the best practice in management of a particular condition. The ward nursing staff involved with the pathway as well as the Clinical Pathway Manager should ensure that staff are up to date in these areas. This can be achieved by one on one education as well as group sessions.

### *When should I review a clinical pathway?*

Clinical pathways should be reviewed at least every 2 years. This is to ensure that the content still represents best practice and provides opportunities for staff to discuss management of a particular diagnosis or procedure. You can find the last review date on the intranet site, or on the bottom of each page of the path. If a clinical pathway you are involved with requires a review, contact your Clinical Pathway Manager to assist you with this process.

The pathway can be updated at any time if the content is outdated or requires revision.

### *How do I review a Clinical Pathway?*

The clinical pathway review is usually completed by ward nursing or clinical staff, involving the whole team. To review a clinical pathway, follow the Clinical Pathway Development / Review Checklist. It is available on the intranet here: [http://www.rch.org.au/rch\\_clinpath](http://www.rch.org.au/rch_clinpath)

The Clinical Pathway Manager should be able to assist you through the process. If you have any questions, please contact the Care Coordination Manager.

Provided with this guide is a set of tools to assist with the data collection involved in pathway review. Please collect as much information as you can to assist with a thorough process.

### *How do I get more help?*

You can contact your Clinical Pathway Manager, Unit Manager or the Care Coordination Manager in Clinical Support Services: ext/pg 6956.

You can also find some more information on the website:

[http://www.rch.org.au/rch\\_clinpath](http://www.rch.org.au/rch_clinpath)

