

Lay Summary

Clinical audit in the NHS is designed to improve patient outcomes across a wide range of medical, surgical and mental health conditions. Its aim is to involve healthcare professionals in systematic evaluation of their clinical practice against agreed standards and to support and encourage improvement in the quality of treatment and delivery of patient care. It does this by evaluating what happens to patients during and after their care, and examining how the services that deliver that care are structured.

PICANet is a high quality national clinical audit that collects information on children receiving intensive care in Britain and Ireland. PICANet aims to collect data that will ensure the best quality care is given to children in Paediatric Intensive Care Units. The information also helps with the planning of care, allows for continuous audit of the service delivered and enables PICANet to describe what external and social factors affect the admission of critically ill children to paediatric intensive care.

PICANet work with the teams of doctors and nurses who care for children in Paediatric Intensive Care Units. We have also established links with patient and parent groups to review the facilities and information available to families.

Every year PICANet publish a report including information on the numbers of children who receive care and the type of treatment they receive in each unit. No individual child can ever be identified. This year (2009) the report highlights the following:

- Over 47,000 children aged between 0 and 15 years received care in a Paediatric Intensive Care Unit in England, Wales Scotland and Northern Ireland in the three years 2006 -2008.
- In the UK there are 28 NHS Hospital Trusts where children are admitted for intensive care and 57% of admissions are as a result of unplanned emergencies.
- Children are generally transported to hospital by specially trained teams of doctors and nurses
- Nearly half the children are under 1 year of age (47%) and more boys (56%) than girls are admitted for intensive care.
- A large proportion of children receive mechanical assistance (67%) with their breathing although the numbers vary by hospital.
- Most children stay in paediatric intensive care 2 days or less but this may vary from less than an hour to over a week.
- It is extremely rare for children to die in paediatric intensive care and over 95% leave this type of specialist care alive. All hospitals have death rates which are no higher than expected.
- Information and facilities available for parents or carers of children in intensive care is not standardised across the UK and varies in different hospitals.

PICANet makes a number of recommendations for improving the Paediatric Intensive Care service. In 2009 these include:

- PICANet develops a working group of patient / parent groups and the clinical community. This group will produce standard recommendations on information and facilities that should be available for parents/carers of patients in PICUs and will ensure the development of patient orientated audits.
- Individual PICUs ensure that current information about PICANet is available for patients and families in the form of leaflets, posters and via the web.

More information on PICANet can be found at www.picanet.org.uk.