

Managing Clinical Risks

Identifying and recording any near misses, slips and errors can be a useful tool in improving your systems and providing a greater quality of care to your patients. All staff should be familiar with how, and to whom, they are to report any occurrences they believe could be prevented or avoided in the future. Discussing and analysing these errors at staff meetings, and using the feedback to improve systems where applicable, is of benefit to your practice and an important risk management strategy. Not improving processes after recognising a near miss can put the practice at risk of a medico legal situation and leave patients exposed to an increased risk of an event re-occurring.

RACGP 4th Edition Standards

3.1.2 *Our practice has clinical risk management systems to enhance the quality and safety of our patient care*

Assessment methods

- Interviews with GPs and practice staff

GPs and staff will be able to describe the process for identifying any slips, lapses or mistakes in the Practice and how, and to whom, at the Practice they are to report an incident. Staff should also be able to describe, where applicable, an improvement made from identifying an error to prevent such an incident from reoccurring.

- Document review

Surveyors will review documented systems for dealing with near missed and mistakes, and contingency plans for adverse and unexpected events.

Meeting the standards

The practice should have an 'Incident Form' available for staff to complete documenting any near misses, slips or errors that may occur. These events would then be discussed and new policies/systems implemented to help prevent similar incidents from reoccurring. A central register of all slips, lapses or errors would be beneficial also. Incident forms and/or a central register should be kept for referral in case a medico-legal issue was to arise.

Practices need to have contingency plans for unusual events that may disrupt patient care such as natural disasters or disease outbreaks that overstretch the practice's capacity, or the sudden, unexpected absence of key members of the clinical team.

For further reference, you may wish to review the RACGP 'Using near misses to improve the quality of care for your patients' publication. Order forms are available to download at <http://www.racgp.org.au/folder.asp?id=834> or phone the College directly on 03 8699 0495.