Clinical audit is an essential tool to help us to objectively assess how well we actually manage our patients.

What is a clinical audit?
- Quality assurance activity
- Evaluates current practice against a recognised “gold standard”
- Identifies errors / weaknesses in current practice
- Measures are then identified and implemented to correct these errors / weaknesses
- A review of clinical practice is undertaken 3 – 6 months later to ensure that the corrective measures are in place and impacting on clinical care.

When do we do a clinical audit?
- Provincial policy is that clinical audits must be conducted in each hospital every six months
  - In level 2 & 3 hospitals each clinical department must conduct 2 clinical audits a year
  - In level 1 hospitals 2 clinical audits must be conducted each year
- We suggest that in level 1 hospitals 1 in every 4 clinical audits should focus on perinatal, paediatric or child health issues, that is 1 audit every 2 years.

How do we do a clinical audit?
- Identify a team to undertake the clinical audit – this should include at least a doctor, nurse, ward clerk and admin clerk
- Identify a topic for the clinical audit – this should focus on conditions or practices that have a major impact on the department / hospital because they are extremely common, have a high morbidity or mortality or are very expensive to manage
- Find a provincial, national or international guideline on the management of the chosen topic which can form the basis of a “gold standard” against which to compare your practice
- Select 2 – 4 parameters each for the history, examination, investigation and management of the condition that you expect to be applied to every patient with that condition. These will form the indicators with which you will compare your current practice and the “gold standard”
- Develop a data capture form (this package contains six: ARI, LGA, fits, asthma, malnutrition, PTB)
- Define the time period, patient demographic and patient numbers for your sample
- Identify patients who fulfill the criteria for your sample
- Find their medical record
- Review the medical record objectively and complete the data capture form
- Analyse the data to compare your performance against the “gold standard”
- Inform your staff / colleagues of how well your practice compares to the expected “gold standard”
- Develop and implement a response to correct any deficiencies in your practice

Support for the process:
- The Department of Paediatrics in Pietermaritzburg is keen to assist with clinical audits at all levels of care
- We will do this by:
  - Providing clinical guidelines which can be used as the “gold standard” for the management of common paediatric problems
  - Providing copies of the audit tools used for clinical audits in our department
  - Providing on site consultant input into the development and implementation of a paediatric clinical audit

By doing clinical audit you will improve the quality of care that children receive in your hospital. If you choose your topic carefully, you may even reduce your hospital mortality for children. Use ChIP to help you prioritise topics.