DOCUMENT REVIEW

The old adage “If it is not documented it did not happen” has never been truer than it is today. However documentation alone is not enough and we all need to ensure that the quality of our clinical records satisfy both clinical and medico-legal purposes.

What is a document review?
A document review is a process for assessing the quality of clinical records:
- This includes all components of the record – medical notes, nursing process, observation and treatment charts, patient results etc.
- It looks at the completeness of the record NOT the quality of care that the patient is receiving.

Why is a document review important?
A document review is important to ensure:
- Comprehensive clinical records that
  - Reflect the condition of and care offered to every patient
  - Facilitate communication between health care providers
- Compliance with medico-legal requirements.

How is the review done?
A document review needs to be conducted:
- Independently for the medical and nursing components of the clinical record
- Retrospectively following the discharge of the patient
- Using a proforma to compare the content of the sample record against what is expected in an ideal record

Who should do the review?
Responsibility for undertaking the document reviews lie with the doctor and sister-in-charge of the nursery or children’s ward in each hospital.

What process should be followed?
- Aim to review one or two clinical records each week
- Review the record at the time of discharging the patient
- Use the proforma provided
- Review the clinical record day-by-day noting whether the required element (patient’s name, date, doctors signature) is always present (compliant), sometimes present (partially compliant) or never present (non compliant)
- Each element in the proforma is given a score out of 2 - 0 for non compliant, 1 for partially compliant and 2 for compliant
- The total score for the clinical record is calculated at the bottom of the proforma and converted into a percentage which provides a comparison of how close the reviewed record is to an ideal clinical record

Feedback
- Feedback is essential to ensure benefit from the process
- Must involve all staff working with newborn babies or children
- Must occur monthly and should include an ongoing graphic display that illustrates any change in the degree of compliance achieved