

Strictly embargoed until 00.01 hours Thursday 30 January 2003

CLEANLINESS OF SCOTLAND'S HOSPITALS NEEDS TO IMPROVE

A review has found only half of the hospitals in Scotland have high levels of cleanliness in their wards. Twenty per cent inspected by Audit Scotland showed a clear need for improvement, with the remainder in need of some minor improvement.

Spot checks, carried out at 74 hospitals throughout Scotland, looked at a sample of wards and public areas. Reviewers checked floors, walls, fixtures and fittings (such as beds and lockers), sanitary ware (toilets, basins), curtains, screens and waste bins. Each area was rated according to how clean it was.

In a report out today, a total of 21 hospitals are named as giving cause for concern in terms of poor levels of cleanliness in wards and/or public areas. Wards in 14 hospitals (19%) and public areas in 12 hospitals (16%) were rated as giving cause for concern.

The Auditor General for Scotland, Robert Black said: "One in five hospitals show a clear need for improvement. Patients rightly expect to be treated in clean hospitals and this is a priority for the health department. It is important that the concerns raised in this report are addressed at the highest levels in trusts"

Audit Scotland found that a variety of factors made it difficult for some hospitals to achieve high levels of cleanliness.

- In a quarter of wards the staff time spent on cleaning was less than the hospital planned. Staff time spent *monitoring* cleaning was less than planned in a third of wards. Many hospitals had high levels of sickness absence, staff vacancies and turnover of staff.
- The failure to draw up and implement clearly defined responsibilities between domestic services and other staff was a concern, particularly in relation to the cleaning of clinical equipment.
- Poorly defined contracts caused difficulties in some hospitals where cleaning is provided by external contractors. Unclear terms and the lack of ability of hospital management to influence the providers were particular problems.
- Poor maintenance in some hospitals makes it more difficult for areas to be cleaned effectively.

Best practice standards for hospital cleaning were published by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland in 2002 as part of their work on standards for healthcare associated infection (HAI). This review found that many trusts had carried out considerable work to implement these standards. A lot of work is still taking place and further development is needed in a number of trusts.

The report makes a number of recommendations, including an ongoing programme of reviews of cleanliness. All hospital trusts have agreed actions to address any concerns identified.

For further information please contact Katie Fleming or James Gillies on 0131 624 9970/9971

Notes

1. This report, '*Hospital cleaning*', is a follow up to '*A clean bill of health*', a baseline review of hospital cleaning services published in April 2000.
2. Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. It provides services to the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland.
3. The Auditor General is responsible for securing the audit of the Scottish Executive and most other public bodies in Scotland, except local authorities. He investigates whether spending bodies achieve the best possible value for money and adhere to the highest standards of financial management. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Executive or the Scottish Parliament.
4. This report is complementary to the review of Healthcare Associated Infection (HAI) Infection control recently published by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland.
5. NHS Quality Improvement Scotland was established in January 2003 and incorporates a number of clinical effectiveness bodies, including Clinical Standards Board for Scotland (CSBS). Standards for hospital cleaning services were issued by CSBS in 2002 at the request of the Scottish Executive Health Department.