

CASC tip sheet #8

Writing your clinical audit report

BACKGROUND

It is essential that organisations document their clinical audit projects, producing clear and concise reports to share with a wide variety of stakeholders. HQIP's *Best Practice in Clinical Audit guide* states 'the results of the audit, including the outcome and implementation of the action plan, should be shared with key stakeholders'. Most NHS Trusts now adopt standardised clinical audit report templates to assist with consistency of delivery, but interestingly many people still find writing a clinical audit report a challenging and sometimes daunting experience.

5 essential elements of a high quality audit report

Clear and logically structured document

As noted above, most teams now have access to an in-house reporting template that should be fit-for-purpose. When reporting clinical audit projects it is important that information is conveyed in a logical order (i.e. following the audit process). We would advise that a short executive summary at the start is included.



Concise and precise content

It is sad to say but we often encounter long-winded, waffly reports. People are busy and therefore they are unlikely to have time to read very detailed reports. Equally, it is vital that audit data included in reports is accurate and explained. Inaccurate and/or unclear data undermines credibility. Our motto is, be 'concise and precise'!

Focus on the audience/readership

A good clinical audit report is not written to satisfy the expectations of the author, but instead should take into account the needs of the target audience. Far too often, audit reports are written that include jargon and acronyms that those reading the report (often patients/carers) are unfamiliar with. Equally, results need to be displayed in a format that those reading the report can comprehend.



Replicability

Perhaps the true acid test of any clinical audit report is: could readers use the report to replicate your clinical audit project? If the answer to this is 'no' then the report is likely to be sub-optimal. Audit reports should clearly set out the rationale for the project, explain how it was carried out, specify what changes were put in place and include the data collection tool, action plan and other key elements in the appendix.

Acknowledge all participants

Exemplary clinical audit projects are typically undertaken by a team of people (not individuals). Audit reports should acknowledge and thank all those who have taken part in the project, especially those who collected data! If your audit is based on the work of others then it is vital that they are acknowledged. Equally, we would advise that other team members proof read final reports prior to dissemination.

