



## Program name

### Clinical Incident Management Program

A comprehensive program for organisations to ensure prompt, effective and consistent conversations with patients following serious adverse outcomes

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## Overview

The Clinical Incident Management program was pioneered by the Cognitive Institute and has been adopted throughout the Commonwealth, including Australian Open Disclosure Pilot sites.

The CIM program provides organisations with a systematic, comprehensive and quality assured approach to communicating with patients following a serious adverse outcome.

The model centres around two key principles:

- processes and documentation for thorough preparation; and
- senior clinicians (CIM Consultants), highly trained in Open Disclosure communication, accompanying the treating clinician in the conversation with patients and carers.

The Institute supports the hospital designing and implementing these processes, and the CIM training program focuses on providing advanced communication skills training to senior clinicians, including skills rehearsal with actors and documents to support the information gathering and reporting processes.

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## Premise

Extensive international research shows that failure to engage and support patients after an adverse event can significantly increase exposure to litigation and complaints.

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## Benefits of CIM

- Better care and attention to the patient's needs following an adverse event
  - Reduced exposure to litigation and complaints for the hospital and treating clinician
  - Ensures a consistent and pre-planned collective position for both the hospital and treating clinician
  - Support for the patient experiencing suffering and anxiety, while ensuring a thorough conversation with the patient, covering all areas proven to reduce exposure to litigation
  - Compensation for any challenges/deficiencies the treating clinician may have in effectively conducting the conversation
  - Support for the treating clinician by providing expert assistance in sharing responsibility and offering the assistance of an expert who has trained in this area
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## How does CIM work?

CIM follows a clear process that ensures a rapid and effective response.

The Cognitive Institute's program provides training of the CIM Consultants, as well as complete systems, process planners, checklists and worksheets.

- STEP 1** Screening of reported incidents to identify those appropriate for the CIM process
  - STEP 2** Conducting the CIM team meeting to ascertain full information on the incident and other important considerations for the discussion with the patient
  - STEP 3** Debriefing of treating clinician with CIM Consultant to plan roles and strategies for conducting the patient meeting
  - STEP 4** Conducting the meeting with patient (and carers)
  - STEP 5** Followup of agreed actions and decisions and confirmation to patient in letter
  - STEP 6** Reporting to CIM team on outcome of patient discussion
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## The role of the CIM Consultant

The CIM Consultant is a senior clinician identified by the hospital as having the clinical experience, skills and motivation to undertake this challenging role.

The role of the CIM Consultant is to ensure the challenging discussion with the patient and carers about an adverse outcome is undertaken effectively by:

- ensuring the psychological needs of the patient and clinician are attended to
- ensuring safety and quality issues arising from incident are communicated with the patient, and patient concerns are addressed
- representing the hospital's and the clinician(s)' agreed response to the patient
- assisting colleague/s in undertaking the discussion with the patient

Introducing the CIM Consultant acknowledges and addresses the difficulty many treating clinicians have in conducting conversations with patients about adverse outcomes, such as

- limited experience and skill
  - guilt and distress over the patient's pain and distress
  - fear of patient anger and grief
  - pressure to prematurely speculate on causes and admit liability
  - uncertainty about the hospital's investigative and reporting process
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## The CIM training program

The CIM training is an intensive 2 day program for senior clinicians identified as the hospital's CIM Consultants.

The program includes:

- insights into the psychological and emotional state of patients suffering an adverse outcome, as well as clinicians' own emotional barriers to undertaking these difficult conversations
- an understanding of what and why patients want to know about adverse outcomes
- exploration of the dynamics in supporting a treating clinician
- examination of the hospital's policies and processes
- lectures and exercises focusing on preparing with the treating clinician, including use of a comprehensive CIM Response Planner
- rehearsal of skills with trained actors to prepared scenarios
- skills for dealing with difficulties
- following up after the patient conversation
- issues around supporting a colleague

## The CIM process and who is involved

The CIM Program brings together hospital experts to:

- ascertain as complete a picture of the adverse event as possible at the time
- determine the hospital's responsibilities
- plan wording for an expression of regret or apology to patient
- decide on the hospital's actions to look after the patient
- address responses to likely patient questions and demands
- determine responsibilities for talking with the patient (and family)

These parties are recommended to be part of the CIM Response Team

- CIM leader to co-ordinate the system and resources
- Highly trained CIM Consultant to assist the treating clinician
- Treating clinician
- Hospital's solicitor / legal counsel
- Quality and safety manager
- Senior clinicians / managers able to contributing to the discussion

## Related reading

The following articles may assist in providing background information:

- Should we disclose harmful errors to patients, and if so how?  
– Gallagher and Lucas, Volume 12, No 5, May 2005, Journal of Communication
- COPIC 3 R's Report
- 'Sorry' Reduces Malpractice Cases  
– [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4234901](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4234901)

For information on the Cognitive Institute, presenters and workshops visit [www.cognitiveinstitute.com.au](http://www.cognitiveinstitute.com.au)

To book a workshop call Head Office on 61 7 3876 5711 or email [enquiries@cognitiveinstitute.com.au](mailto:enquiries@cognitiveinstitute.com.au)

