

Draft letter for the CHFG

The Clinical Human Factors Group (CHFG) is an organisation formed from the alliance of a number of healthcare and human factors professionals. It aims to improve understanding of the critical role of human factors in providing safer care for patients. It seeks opportunities to promote and support a wider understanding of systems, procedures, education and training in the support of professionals and organisations now delivering increasingly complex healthcare.

Progress in medical care has been explosive in recent decades resulting in widespread benefits. However, the potency of modern interventions is accompanied by increased risk. In many instances, organisational and personal development in the management of those risks, have not kept pace.

Recently the potential for improving the safety of patients by the development of systems defences has shown encouraging benefit. These defences act as an additional layer to support the performance of individuals and teams. Checklists, briefing and debriefing have been shown to be effective in a variety of high-risk situations and industries. Each needs to be supported by appropriate training.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) will launch a campaign “Safe Surgery Saves Lives” in June 2008 at which the Surgical Safety Checklist currently being developed will be offered worldwide. It is designed to ensure that surgical teams are given a defined opportunity to check safety-critical information

- a) prior to induction of anaesthesia (Sign in)
- b) prior to skin incision (Time out)
- c) prior to the patient leaving the operating theatre (Sign out)

It is suitable for modification by local teams to suit their specialty and conditions.

The CHFG fully supports this approach to safer practice. It also affirms the requirement for effective management and the necessary education and training. This is needed to ensure that this important tool is correctly understood and is implemented within a just culture. These are essential to promote positive ownership by those who use it.