

On 4th June 2014, the RACGP *Infection Prevention and Control Standards for general practice and other office-based and community-based practices* - the *RACGP Infection Prevention and Control Standards* (5th edition) - was released. This is the 5th edition of this publication that the RACGP has produced.

The *RACGP Infection Prevention and Control Standards* (5th edition) is a guide to assist health professionals and other staff implementing procedures involving infection prevention and control and is available at <http://www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/standards/infectioncontrol>.

The review and update process

The review and update process undertaken in order to produce the *RACGP Infection Prevention and Control Standards* (5th edition) involved experts in the field of general practice, infection prevention and control, infectious diseases and microbiology.

The review process involved:

- undertaking a literature review of relevant articles, studies and clinical guidelines to inform the evidence base of this project;
- seeking submissions from the profession on the 4th edition Infection Control Standards;
- reviewing the contents of the 4th edition Infection Control Standards by an RACGP Infection Control Standards Steering Committee;
- developing draft versions of the new Infection Prevention and Control Standards based on the literature review, submissions and reviews; and
- developing the final version of the new Infection Prevention and Control Standards.

The new *RACGP Infection Prevention and Control Standards* (5th edition) provides information on:

- Infection prevention and control principles
- Protecting the health of staff
- Managing the practice physical environment
- Processing reusable equipment
- Disease surveillance

What has been updated?

The updated *RACGP Infection Prevention and Control Standards* (5th edition) builds on the previous edition and provides information and advice in a more streamlined and user friendly fashion. A number of changes have been made to the way that information is presented and explained in an effort to ensure that it is accessible to all members of the practice team.

As reflected in the change in title, the *RACGP Infection Prevention and Control Standards* (5th edition) has a greater focus on the role of the practice in the prevention of infection, in addition to the control of the spread of infection. It also strengthens the focus on risk assessment and risk management, whilst emphasising the importance of staff taking control of the infection prevention and control processes of their practice.

The main areas of change in the *RACGP Infection Prevention and Control Standards* (5th edition) are:

- a greater emphasis on practices appointing an infection prevention and control coordinator who has the primary responsibility for overseeing a comprehensive infection prevention and control program (Section 1.1);
- noting that each practice needs to perform regular infection prevention and control risk assessments and determine how best to manage any identified risks through a combination of education and training as well as redesign of work practices (Section 1.1);
- inclusion of reference to the '5 moments for hand hygiene' as an important part of infection prevention and control (Section 1.3);
- ensuring the application and removal of personal protective equipment is consistent with the Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare (Section 1.5);
- provision of additional information in relation to staff immunisations, specifically noting that practices should consider supplying new employees with a list of recommended vaccinations that they can take to their own GP to sign confirming their vaccination status (Section 2.1);
- a focus on practices needing to appoint a person responsible for ensuring implementation of practice cleaning policies (Section 3.1);
- a greater emphasis on the importance of cleaning all environmental surfaces in the practice, including that the level of cleaning should be determined based on a risk assessment which considers the frequency of traffic or bodily contact of each surface and the risk of transmission of contamination and infection (Section 3.1);
- inclusion of information that states the management of waste must conform to state or territory regulations (Section 3.4);
- noting that training and competency assessment for staff involved in processing equipment for reuse should be documented (Section 4.2);
- advising that sterilisers without a printer or data logger are obsolete and should not be used (Section 4.10);
- noting that specialised instruments that are unavailable in a disposable form must be accompanied by an appropriate cleaning and decontamination process (Section 4.19);
- advising that, due to the time and resources involved in cleaning auroscope tips, that disposable tips should be used (Section 4.19);
- reinforcing that all members of the practice team should be able to demonstrate how risks of potential cross-infection within the practice are appropriately managed (Section 5.1); and
- ensuring that correct terminology is used throughout, including using 'transmission-based precautions' instead of 'additional precautions' and 'sterile barrier systems' instead of 'packaging'.

It is anticipated that the *RACGP Infection Prevention and Control Standards* (5th edition) will be updated as required, with any updates being advised via the RACGP website (<http://www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/standards/infectioncontrol>).

Any queries regarding the *RACGP Infection Prevention and Control Standards* (5th edition) can be sent by email to standards@racgp.org.au.