

## Clinical governance

**6.12** Professional and statutory bodies have a vital role in setting and promoting standards, but shifting the focus towards quality will also require practitioners to accept responsibility for developing and maintaining standards within their local NHS organisations. For this reason the Government will require every NHS Trust to embrace the concept of 'clinical governance' so that quality is at the core, both of their responsibilities as organisations and of each of their staff as individual professionals.

**6.13** This new approach to quality will be explicitly reflected in the responsibilities and management of NHS Trusts. Under the internal market, NHS Trusts' principal statutory duties were financial. The Government will bring forward legislation to give them a new duty for the quality of care. Under these arrangements, Chief Executives will carry ultimate responsibility for assuring the quality of the services provided by their NHS Trust, just as they are already accountable for the proper use of resources.

**6.14** Chief Executives will be expected to ensure there are appropriate local arrangements to give them and the NHS Trust board firm assurances that their responsibilities for quality are being met. This might be through the creation of a Board Sub-Committee, led by a named senior consultant, nurse, or other clinical professional, with responsibility for ensuring the internal clinical governance of the organisation.

**6.15** These arrangements should build on and strengthen the existing systems of professional self-regulation and the principles of corporate governance, but offer a framework for extending this more systematically into the local clinical community. It is important that these arrangements engage professionals at ward and clinical level. NHS Trust boards will expect to receive monthly reports on quality, in the same way as they now receive financial reports, and to publish an annual report on what they are doing to assure quality. Quality will quite literally be on the agenda of every NHS Trust board.

A quality organisation will ensure that:

- quality improvement processes (eg clinical audit) are in place and integrated with the quality programme for the organisation as a whole
- leadership skills are developed at clinical team level
- evidence-based practice is in day-to-day use with the infrastructure to support it
- good practice, ideas and innovations (which have been evaluated) are systematically disseminated within and outside the organisation
- clinical risk reduction programmes of a high standard are in place
- adverse events are detected, and openly investigated; and the lessons learned promptly applied
- lessons for clinical practice are systematically learned from complaints made by patients
- problems of poor clinical performance are recognised at an early stage and dealt with to prevent harm to patients
- all professional development programmes reflect the principles of clinical governance
- the quality of data collected to monitor clinical care is itself of a high standard.