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A CLIENT STORY

Post-Discharge Surgical Site Infection Surveillance at Allevia Hospital

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Ensuring no patient is overlooked.

For over a century, Allevia Hospitals (formerly Mercy Ascot) has been at the forefront of private surgical care in New Zealand. With seven operating rooms, a 99-bed capacity, and specialised units including Intensive Care and Coronary Care, it is one of the country's largest private surgical hospitals. When Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones fell out of a coconut tree in Fiji, it was Allevia Hospitals that he was flown to, to have his brain surgery performed.

An integral part of Allevia Hospitals' commitment to excellence is **Terry Rings, Infection Prevention & Control Clinical Lead**. Terry has actively developed a **comprehensive Surgical Site Infection (SSI) surveillance programme**, leveraging **Cemplicity's patient-reported data solutions** to enhance patient care and infection control.



The challenge to fill the gaps in Post-Discharge Surgical Site Infection (SSI) Surveillance

Traditionally, hospitals relied on ward reports, surgeon feedback, and readmission data to track SSIs. However, this approach had significant limitations:

Lack of post-discharge reporting

Many infections only manifest once a patient is home, making ward-based reporting incomplete.

Missed cases

Some patients sought treatment outside Allevia Hospitals, such as at their GP or a regional hospital, without the infection being formally recorded.

Resource-intensive follow-ups

Manually tracking every surgical patient post-discharge was impractical, especially with a high caseload.

"Now, one of the problems infection control has always had is gathering post-discharge data." - Terry Rings

"Where Cemplicity came into it and revolutionised our data capture capability post-discharge, is where they send out the questionnaire. This has a specific set of questions related to things infection control wants, and it highlights people who say, 'Yes, I've had a problem with my wound.'" - Terry Rings

So how does it work and what happens when a person is highlighted?

Allevia Hospitals implemented Cemplicity's digital patient-reported outcomes system, a move that significantly enhanced their ability to track, analyse, and respond to SSIs.

Cemplicity's automated surveys engage patients via email or SMS, asking key questions before and after surgery. Responses are directly and electronically imported into Allevia Hospital's surveillance database, where Terry and his team can:

- **Flag high-risk patients early**, and focus follow-up efforts efficiently.

- **Uncover infections missed** by other tracking methods, ensuring no patient is overlooked.
- **Integrate multiple data streams** – combining ward reports, surgeon feedback, and Cemplicity responses for a holistic view.
- **Analyse infection trends and risk factors**, driving policy and procedural improvements.

Ultimately, enabling a more robust view of SSIs, quicker follow-up and action, and reducing the load on practitioners.

"Instead of having a thousand people to try and follow up in public hospital for readmissions, or try and find out whether or not they've had some sort of contact with healthcare at a variety of different levels, we can focus on those who say, 'Yes, I had a problem.'" – Terry Rings

24%

Previous paper-based survey
response rate

59%

Cemplicity digital approach
response rate

Driving better outcomes by uncovering hidden SSI cases

Since implementing Cemplicity, Allevia Hospitals has been able to identify previously unreported SSI cases that would have otherwise been missed.

"Cemplicity has, over the last year, actually highlighted three or four cases where patients who have come from areas like Dunedin or Gisborne or Hastings, have surgery done here (Allevia Hospitals) and have presented at their local hospital for follow-up treatment. And whammo, we find out that the patient has in fact had a wound infection that even their surgeon didn't report." – Terry Rings

Valid data means Allevia Hospitals can confidently report SSI rates, identify problem areas, and take proactive action to prevent infections. Additionally, response rates have vastly improved:

- Previous paper-based surveys had a 24% response rate.
- With Cemplicity's digital approach, the response rate is now 59% – more than doubling data accuracy and reliability.

Comprehensive and actionable

Terry has structured Allevia Hospital's fully integrated SSI surveillance system around four core data streams:

1. **Ward reports:** Infections reported by hospital staff.
2. **Surgeon feedback:** Direct reports from clinical advisory boards.
3. **Readmission data:** Challenging to obtain but improving with integration efforts.
4. **Cemplicity patient-reported data:** Filling the gaps by tracking infections beyond hospital care.

By bringing all these sources together, Terry has created an SSI tracking system that is comprehensive in reach and focuses attention where needed.

Making a powerful difference to individual patients and healthcare across the country

Looking ahead, Terry sees even greater potential for Cemplicity's data to drive targeted improvements. With ongoing refinement of data integration and analytics, Allevia Hospitals aims to:

- **Refine risk factor analysis** to identify patients who may need extra preventative care.
- **Improve antibiotic stewardship** by ensuring appropriate prophylactic treatments.
- **Strengthen national infection control collaboration**, sharing insights with other hospitals to elevate standards across New Zealand.

"At the end of the day, Cemplicity is part and parcel of that endpoint determination, which is absolutely vital." - Terry Rings

By putting the patient voice at the heart of infection prevention, Allevia Hospitals is leading the way in evidence-based, patient-centric care – ensuring no patient goes home alone.

"It solidifies that endpoint data, and what we do is we will trace through all the different bits and pieces—we might contact the surgeon if the data stream is the surgeon data stream, et cetera." - Terry Rings



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