**“Clinical Audit is a quality improvement process that seeks to improve patient care and outcomes through systematic review of care against explicit criteria and the implementation of change”. (NICE, 2002)**

Clinical audit is all about measuring the quality of care and services against agreed standards and making improvements where necessary. Clinical audit comes under the Clinical Governance umbrella, which forms the system for improving the standard of clinical practice. Aspects of patient care are evaluated against expected standards of care and where necessary, recommendations for change are made.

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We are very excited to announce that we are beginning recruitment for our NELA Patient and Families Involvement Group (PAFIG) at the Royal College of Anaesthetists, London. This group will consist of lay members and will provide critical input into the work we are doing at the audit including what we measure, how we measure it, and how that information is presented and communicated. Membership of the group is a vitally important voluntary role, with the opportunity to have real impact on the direction of this large and important project.

**What is the NELA?**

The National Emergency Laparotomy Audit (NELA) was established in 2012 and is funded by NHS England and Wales as part of the National Clinical Audit and Patient Outcomes Programme.

Around 30,000 patients undergo emergency bowel surgery each year. This high risk procedure is associated with almost 1 in 10 patients dying within 30 days of surgery. Wide variation is seen between hospitals in the processes and outcomes of care.

The project’s overarching aim is to improve the quality of care received by patients undergoing emergency bowel surgery. This includes providing teams at local hospitals with their own data about processes of care (such as patients being able to have their operations in a timely fashion) and also supporting these teams in looking at this information and making changes to how they do things to improve the quality of care and outcomes for patients.

**Why does the NELA need the involvement of patients and their families?**

The information about each and every patient having emergency laparotomy surgery in England and Wales, once collected and analysed, is reported as a yearly report and also made available in a way that is fully accessible by patients and their families.In order to do this well, it is important that the voices of those who use emergency surgical services in England and Wales are listened to. We envisage requiring patient and public input in the following areas:

* How we communicate with patients and their families about the audit, its purpose and how the information about them is collected and processed;
* Helping us choose which care processes are the most important ones to focus on when we present the findings of the audit and the best way of doing this;
* Ensuring the project understands which of the standards of care and processes it measures are particularly important to patients and their families;
* How we present information through our website and in written reports.

**Who will be in the Patient and family Group?**

The group will consist of up to eight lay members who have had some experience, as a patient or a carer, of emergency bowel surgery and associated services within the last 5 years. This group would meet up to twice a year (with dialling in/videoconferencing available).

**Should I apply?**

If you have had a recent experience of emergency laparotomy surgery, either yourself or as a partner or family member, in England or Wales please do apply. We are keen to recruit a panel with a range of experiences of all ages and backgrounds and who had surgery for a wide range of reasons.

**What has NELA done to enable a wide range of people to be involved?**

We are actively seeking to recruit patients, their family members or friends with a range of experiences of emergency bowel surgery. Travel will be booked for you as required and, if necessary, accommodation will also be provided. We will make sure that all material is accessible to all members and that it is presented in plain English with all medical terminology explained clearly.

The RCOA has a long and successful history of encouraging the involvement of the public in its work. You can find out more about some of the ways the College involves the public here: <https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/laycom>

**When will the meetings be? What if I can’t attend?**

Meetings will take place on a week day. We will make every effort to make sure meeting dates suit all members of the group. In addition to the meetings, we will send you emails from time to time asking for your input. We understand that it can be difficult to take part in meetings with a young family, or if you require carers, so if you are unable to attend a meeting, that is not a problem.

If you have any questions or would like to contact us for any reason please email – [info@nela.org.uk](mailto:info@nela.org.uk)