

MEDIA RELEASE

Clinical Excellence Commission

Friday September 13, 2019

Patients & carers urged to be alert and consider ‘could it be sepsis?’

NSW health workers have almost halved the time it takes for sepsis patients to start life-saving antibiotic treatment. Since the introduction of the Clinical Excellence Commission’s statewide SEPSIS KILLS program in 2011 the median time to start antibiotics has dropped from 104 minutes in 2011 to 59 minutes in 2018¹.

Clinical Excellence Commission Director Systems Improvement Dr Harvey Lander said, internationally, sepsis is recognised as a medical emergency where the body’s response to an infection is so great that it starts to attack and injure its own tissues and organs.

“Any delays in identifying symptoms and starting treatment including antibiotics, increase a patient’s risk of death, loss of limbs or other long-term disability,” Dr Lander said.

“We are now urging the public to support our sepsis work by being alert to sepsis symptoms and to get loved ones to hospital immediately if sepsis symptoms appear. We need everyone to consider ‘could it be sepsis?’ so, we can stop sepsis and save lives.

“Sepsis symptoms to be alert for in very unwell adult patients with an infection include muscle pain, shivering, breathlessness, confusion or not passing urine for more than a day.

“If a child is unwell with an infection, look out for a very high or very low temperature, very fast breathing, confusion, a “fit” or convulsion, mottled skin, lethargy, not feeding, and repeated vomiting as alert symptoms. The groups most at risk are the very young, those older than 65 years and people with weakened immune systems.”

World Sepsis Day falls on September 13 and it’s a great time to remind health workers, patients and carers everywhere to be alert to symptoms and ask - ‘Could it be sepsis’?

“Sepsis is a very serious condition and not usually on the minds of families caring for a loved one, but sepsis moves rapidly and being alert to symptoms and getting anyone with symptoms to hospital is crucial to save lives and reduce harm,” Dr Lander said.

Patients with sepsis are up to five times more likely to die than patients with a heart attack or stroke² so beginning treatment immediately is crucial to saving lives and improving patient outcomes.

The Clinical Excellence Commission’s [SEPSIS KILLS program](#) aims to reduce sepsis harm to adults and children in NSW hospitals. The adult, paediatric, newborn and maternal [sepsis pathways](#) support clinicians to recognise and treat sepsis effectively – this includes escalating sepsis cases to seek senior medical advice early.

- Ends -

Media inquiries: Sharon Hogan 0434 308 924

¹ <http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/echartbook/cec-indicators-intro-echartbook/sepsis>

² The George Institute for Global Health, Australian Sepsis Network. (2017). Stopping Sepsis: A National Action Plan