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Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board: Operating Theatres Follow-Up

1. Operating theatre services are an essential part of patient care. Theatres should be cost effective, support the achievement of waiting time targets and contribute to high-quality patient care. Theatres are highly dependent on external factors. If pre/post-operative processes are suboptimal this will affect theatres.
2. The Wales Audit Office review in 2012 said that the Health Board had rightly focused significant efforts in putting in place the groundwork for improvements across theatre services. However, the impacts on performance had been disappointing and the Health Board should give priority to tackling some key, remaining barriers.
3. The Wales Audit Office has followed up theatres in Abertawe Bro Morgannwg and all other health boards, except Powys, in response to requests from Audit Committees, executives and others and recognition that theatre performance in many areas across Wales remains suboptimal.
4. We sought to answer the following question: **Is the Health Board building on our previous recommendations and delivering high-quality and efficient theatre services?**

Key findings

5. The table below summarises our key findings. Detailed findings are set out in the slides attached to this summary.

Overall conclusion: The Health Board has improved some aspects of the surgical pathway but there has been limited improvement in theatres and implementation of our recommendations has been patchy. Theatre performance remains problematic although use of theatre safety checks has improved.

Part 1: Implementation of recommendations has been patchy since the end of the Theatre Programme. New funding for theatre staff presents an important opportunity.

Part 2: Theatre performance remains suboptimal.

Part 3: The Health Board's pathway work is focusing on the barriers that lie outside theatres' direct control. There is a need to supplement this with specific work within theatres.

Part 4: Failings in the use of the surgical checklist sparked improvements in key safety interventions.

Recommendations

6. We recommend that the Health Board should:

R1 Reintroduce a structured programme for theatre improvement, possibly as a workstream within the Surgical Pathway Board.

R2 Introduce a mechanism to ensure more regular executive oversight of theatre efficiency, productivity and safety.

R3 Review the role of Clinical Director for theatres to ensure they are empowered to troubleshoot problems wherever they arise in the pathway.

R4 Develop an approach to performance management in theatres that ensures good quality data is widely used to drive improvement.

R5 Draw on the expertise of the Health Board's Communications team to promote to staff the benefits of using the WHO checklist and briefings.

R6 Carry out further work to understand and manage down the high sickness absence rate in theatres.

7. Further information can be obtained from Stephen Lisle, Performance Specialist (Tel: 07815 955470, email: stephen.lisle@wao.gov.uk).