Dear Potential Participating Site,

Evidence from clinical trials demonstrates that appropriate nutrition support, provided early during critical illness, improves patient outcomes. Our multi-disciplinary academic team based at the University of Sydney has recently initiated a web-based quality improvement project to help Intensive Care Units throughout the World benchmark and improve their own nutrition practices. The purpose of this letter is to invite your ICU to participate in the first step of this Global benchmarking project.

Benchmarking current practice is the first step towards identifying a need for improvement. In the second step of this project, if a hospital identifies a need for improvement using benchmark data, we will provide the hospital with a practice change package that includes evidence, evidence summaries, support tools and an on-line training package designed to help the site achieve maximum change. The Publications and Grants section of our web site ([www.EvidenceBased.net/Research](http://www.EvidenceBased.net/Research)) establishes our team’s expertise in this field.

**Methods**

In order to benchmark and support practice change, we have opened a secure, encrypted and password protected web site for access by participating ICUs using technology that we used to support practice improvement initiatives throughout Canada, Australia and New Zealand ([www.EvidenceBased.net/Nutrition](http://www.EvidenceBased.net/Nutrition)).

We have received a series of small grants to support this initiative in the USA, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Eventually, we hope to host data from up to 300 ICUs from 15 to 20 countries throughout the world over the next two to three years.
During the first step of this benchmarking project, we will collect minimal data with a focus on the two nutrition interventions supported by the strongest evidence-base: Time from ICU admission to starting EN and time from ICU admission to starting PN. Data collection will be restricted to ICU admission date and EN or PN start date, or ICU discharge date if the patient never received EN or PN (See Figure 1).

Data submitted to our academic web site will be treated as strictly confidential and will be protected by University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee project restrictions. Data will only be used for this project’s stated explicit purposes and will not be released in any form that allows the linking of data to identifiable participating hospitals; however each participating site’s own data will be available to themselves via the study web site in the form of control chart graphs, which can be generated and printed at will after logging on (Figure 2). In addition to the graphical feedback, a more detailed and comprehensive de-identified report will be distributed to participating sites every 6 months via a secure page on the web site.

**Figure 2: Feedback Control Chart**

If a participating site identifies the need to improve practice based on a minimum of 4 months of complete and accurate benchmarking data, they may elect to participate in the second step of this project. During the second step, we will provide participating sites with a practice change package that includes evidence, evidence summaries, support tools and an on-line training package designed to help the site achieve maximum change.

At the conclusion of the first and second steps, we intend to publish the experiences and achievements of our participating sites in a peer review academic journal such as JPEN, with an author manuscript submitted to PubMed Central. If our participating sites agree, we may publish more timely and ongoing project updates in other academic journals.

**What you need to do in order to participate:**

Visit the study web-site ([www.EvidenceBased.net/Nutrition](http://www.EvidenceBased.net/Nutrition)) and contact our team using the e-mail link on the site. We will forward you a registration form that will request a few hospital details (bed number, ICU type etc), appropriate signatures and acknowledgement of HREC approval, or waiver of approval, to participate in this quality improvement initiative. After we verify the details on the registration form, we will provide you with a unique hospital ID and a login to the secure web site.

We look forward to hearing back from you with regards to your hospital’s participation in this project.

Sincerely,

A/Prof. Gordon S. Doig,
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University of Sydney