



## **PUBLICATION POLICY**

**Version 4.0**

**20 November 2019**

**Approved by: AuSCR Management and Steering Committees**

## 1.0 Preamble

This document relates to the Australian Stroke Clinical Registry (AuSCR). This policy provides guidelines for the publication of AuSCR data. This is necessary so that each contributing hospital is clear about the use of AuSCR data once data have been provided to the AuSCR Data Custodian.

This policy covers AuSCR staff, members of the AuSCR Research Task Group, members of the AuSCR hospital network, members of the AuSCR Management and Steering Committees and any other individual requesting access to data from the AuSCR database. *This policy should be read in conjunction with the AuSCR Data Access Policy.*

The publication policy does not apply to site-specific data and, as such, hospitals are free to publish their own data at any time with acknowledgement of AuSCR as per section 1.7 of this policy. If hospitals wish to publish comparisons of local hospital data with AuSCR published data (including data published in the AuSCR annual report) then AuSCR data must also be acknowledged as per section 1.7 of this policy. We strongly encourage those wishing to publish analyses of site-specific AuSCR data to consult with an AuSCR statistician to ensure reliable analyses and to facilitate accurate interpretation of results.

*All processes around the publication of AuSCR data contained within this policy meet the National Health & Medical Research Council's "Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research", 2007 (<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/files/r39.pdf>) and the "Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals: writing and editing for biomedical publication", established by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE, [www.icmje.org](http://www.icmje.org)). They are also consistent with publication policies from other Australian Clinical Quality Registries.<sup>1,2</sup>*

## 1.1 Overview of AuSCR

The AuSCR is a data set of information relating to people with stroke admitted to hospitals. It is an electronic database containing data that have been uploaded from individual hospitals. The AuSCR database exists to assist efforts to understand quality of health care provided in Australia, plan services and assist prevention efforts and treatment decisions.

## 1.2 Data Security & Storage

Data security and storage is assured via the following strategies:

- Encryption of data
- Internal audit
- Disaster recovery plans
- Ongoing security training
- Form-based authentication
- Role-based access

*This document should be read in conjunction with the AuSCR Data Security Policy which provides more information on this topic.*

### **1.3 Confidentiality of Information**

Information held by the AuSCR is confidential. The procedures for making a request for access to data held in the AuSCR Database are outlined in the *AuSCR Data Access Policy*.

Sharing AuSCR data with the general scientific community is an objective established from the outset of the AuSCR initiative and is supported by the AuSCR Management Committee. In preparation for this level of data sharing, each of the AuSCR hospital sites include the following wording in their Patient Information sheets:

*All information is kept strictly confidential and cannot be used outside the Registry, without appropriate approvals. Information is stored in a specially designed, password protected database which can only be accessed by a small number of approved Stroke Registry staff. To facilitate high quality data collection, a review of your hospital medical record may be conducted by Stroke Registry staff.*

*Once your information is entered into the Registry, it will be given a unique identification number for analysis. This means that your name will not be identified in any reports that are produced, and your privacy and confidentiality will be maintained. Your information is protected and we are not allowed to identify you by law.*

*Data collected in the Registry, and through linkage with other health information systems, will be used to better understand treatment and health outcomes for stroke. The Stroke Registry will produce reports on factors that influence the success of stroke care and rehabilitation; aspects of such reports may be presented at conferences or submitted for publication in medical journals. It will not be possible to identify any individuals in any reports.*

*The Registry is an ongoing project; the data are needed to track the quality of stroke care over time so they will not be destroyed.*

*To maintain absolute security and confidentiality, anyone wanting to use any of the data from the Registry will be required to obtain ethics approval from an Ethics Committee.*

This document should be read in conjunction with the *AuSCR Data Access* and the *AuSCR Data Security Policies* which provide more information on this topic.

### **1.4 Plans for Disseminating Registry Information**

Information held by the AuSCR will be used to assess the performance of:

- quality of stroke care in Australia;
- the AuSCR in collecting data about quality of stroke care; and
- case-mix adjusted outcome comparisons.

*This document should be read in conjunction with the AuSCR Quality Assurance Data Management Protocol which provides more information on Standard Quality Assurance Data Management Reports produced by the AuSCR.*

AuSCR staff will use the information held in the Registry to compile reports. Aspects of these reports may be presented at conferences or submitted for publication in medical journals. All reports will contain de-identified patient-level aggregated data to ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times.

*All published work based on the data provided to the AuSCR is subject to this Publication Policy. While this does not include AuSCR activity reports (such as the AuSCR Annual Report) this does include (but is not limited to) manuscripts, abstracts and presentations.*

The AuSCR Consortium will encourage generation of scientific knowledge based on data held by the Data Custodian. To ensure that the data and any limitations in scope or quality of the data provided has been properly understood by the user, pre-publication drafts of manuscripts must be submitted to the AuSCR Management Committee for review and potential advice on data interpretation. As outlined below, the AuSCR must be acknowledged in the appropriate way in all publications and presentations. AuSCR reserves the right to dissociate itself from conclusions drawn from the data if it deems necessary.

### **1.5 Research Task Group**

The purpose of the Research Task Group is to provide independent and unbiased review of external proposals seeking to use the AuSCR data.

*This document should be read in conjunction with the AuSCR Data Access Policy and the AuSCR Research Task Group Terms of Reference which provides further information on the roles and responsibilities of the AuSCR Research Task Group.*

### **1.6 Requests for Access to the AuSCR Data**

Interested parties may present requests for access to datasets for the purposes of scientific investigation. These requests will be reviewed by the Research Task Group on behalf of the Management Committee. In addition, the proposal may need to be reviewed by relevant topic specific sub-committees (e.g. Reperfusion and Telemedicine Sub-Committee). All submitted requests require prior approval from a Human Research Ethics Committee, meet appropriate standards of scientific merit and public health importance and should not have any major overlap with other approved research. Priority may be given to the AuSCR Consortium partners, members of the Management Committee, and those who have contributed data to the AuSCR. De-identified data access to external researchers will be time-limited and occur via a secure online platform which prevents the downloading of the AuSCR data onto external computers/servers.

*This document should be read in conjunction with the AuSCR Data Access Policy which provides full details of accessing the AuSCR data and information.*

### **1.7 Authorship/Publication**

The AuSCR Consortium expects that researchers who have been granted access to Registry information will, to the best of their ability, ensure that their research results are placed in the public domain. A progress report may be requested if a project is not completed within 12 months of the original data request. A project final report is also required within 12 months and failure to comply may impact future data requests. In the instance where researchers struggle to complete the project and publish within an agreed timeframe then the AuSCR Management Committee will offer assistance from another researcher experienced in the analysis of the AuSCR data, where feasible.

#### ***AuSCR Specific Principles***

1. There are a number of options for authorship of publications using the AuSCR data which may include, in addition to members of the writing group, one or more of the members of the Management Committee and/or “the AuSCR Collaboration”. The appropriate authorship

acknowledgement will depend on the number of core AuSCR variables of the AuSCR database that were used.

2. The contact author is responsible for following the publications rules, including that no appropriate author is left out and that no inappropriate author is included (“honorary/courtesy authorships” are not accepted in the AuSCR).

The Research Task Group will be guided in relation to any issues of authorship and intellectual property by the National Health & Medical Research Council’s “Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research”, 2007 which is available at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/files/r39.pdf>.

The minimum requirement for authorship should accord with the principles outlined in the “Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals: writing and editing for biomedical publication”, established by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE, [www.icmje.org](http://www.icmje.org)).

The AuSCR National Coordinator will maintain an up-to-date bibliography and repository of all publications pertaining to the AuSCR and these will be summarized in Annual reports as part of ensuring ongoing transparency. Lead authors are required to provide the AuSCR with the most recent version of all publications and accepted abstracts.

In addition to adhering to the User Agreement as outlined above, the following limitations regarding access to data must be adhered to:

- Patient-specific data shall remain confidential under all circumstances.
- Investigator and site-specific data shall remain confidential and shall not be used in publications, presentations, or other public use (eg for outcome comparisons between hospitals). Following completion of a data access application data release may be granted, but only summary and de-identified data will be provided. Please refer to the AuSCR Data Access Policy for further information.
- Any use of the data must not compete with or interfere with the development, operation, or marketing of the AuSCR database, unless approved in writing by the Management Committee.
- Industry sponsors will not have any editorial control over final publications or presentations either using the AuSCR data or prepared by the AuSCR investigators.

### ***Authorship Criteria***

Authorship is substantive participation where all of the following conditions are met:

1. Conception and design, or data acquisition, analysis or interpretation;
2. Drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content;
3. Final approval of the version to be published.

All others who have contributed, but do not meet all of the criteria listed above, should be named in the acknowledgements with a description of their contribution.

- Where authorship is attributed to a group, such as the AuSCR Management Committee, all members of the group who are named as authors should meet the criteria for authorship.
- Publications should include information on sources of financial support for research.

## ***Acknowledgements***

The AuSCR should be acknowledged in any publication using data provided by the Registry. It is also a requirement to acknowledge use of the Australian Stroke Data Tool (AuSDaT) if data from July 2016 onwards are used (see AuSDaT policies <http://australianstrokecoalition.com.au/ausdat/>).

Individuals coordinating data collection at local hospitals who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be named in the Acknowledgements section of the manuscript, including the site lead (as listed on the relevant HREC approval) and/or primary data collectors, as relevant.

## ***Submission of Publications to the Research Task Group***

The purpose of the Research Task Group is to provide independent scientific review of applications seeking access to the AuSCR data. Please refer to the *Research Task Group Terms of Reference* and the *AuSCR Data Access Policy* for further information. The Management Committee may request that the Research Task Group provide an unbiased review of a publication; such a review would be provided back to the Management Committee.

## ***Tracking of Data Use and Publications***

If the AuSCR data are used in publications, authors will be required to:

1. Include recommended language describing the AuSCR methods and data gathering;
2. Cite AuSCR sponsors;
3. Provide a manuscript to the AuSCR Management Committee for review prior to planned submission; this review may be undertaken by an appointed member of the Management Committee or the Research Task Group;
4. Consult and/or collaborate with an AuSCR statistician where concerns about data analysis and interpretation are raised
5. Inform the AuSCR Steering Committee of acceptance or rejection of the manuscript;
6. Provide manuscript or abstract citation to the AuSCR Office upon acceptance and
7. Provide URL to the published work, if possible.

Researchers will be strongly encouraged to contact one of the AuSCR statisticians via the National Coordinator *prior* to manuscript preparation to ensure that robust analyses have been undertaken and to facilitate the accurate interpretation of results.

## ***Publication Review Timeline***

Manuscripts resulting from work by the AuSCR staff investigators/co-investigators or external researchers must be submitted to the Management Committee prior to the date of submission for review. Please be aware that there is a lead time to allow the AuSCR Data Custodian, or nominee, to review compliance with the AuSCR policies related to publication and make a recommendation to the Chair of the Management Committee or nominee. Where the Data Custodian identifies that the publication is not compliant with the AuSCR policies then the Chair of the Management Committee may elect to forward the manuscript to the Management Committee for review. Thus, lead authors should liaise with the AuSCR National Coordinator to ensure sufficient time to meet the targeted submission for a peer-reviewed article.

## 1.8 Unusual Situations

It is expected that most users of the AuSCR data will follow these guidelines in good faith and that most analyses will be of reasonable quality. The Research Task Group does not intend to review manuscripts for scientific quality, preferring to let the peer-review process sort out quality. It is recognized that the AuSCR data may even be used to support publications with conflicting results. However, we do anticipate the possibility of some unusual circumstances.

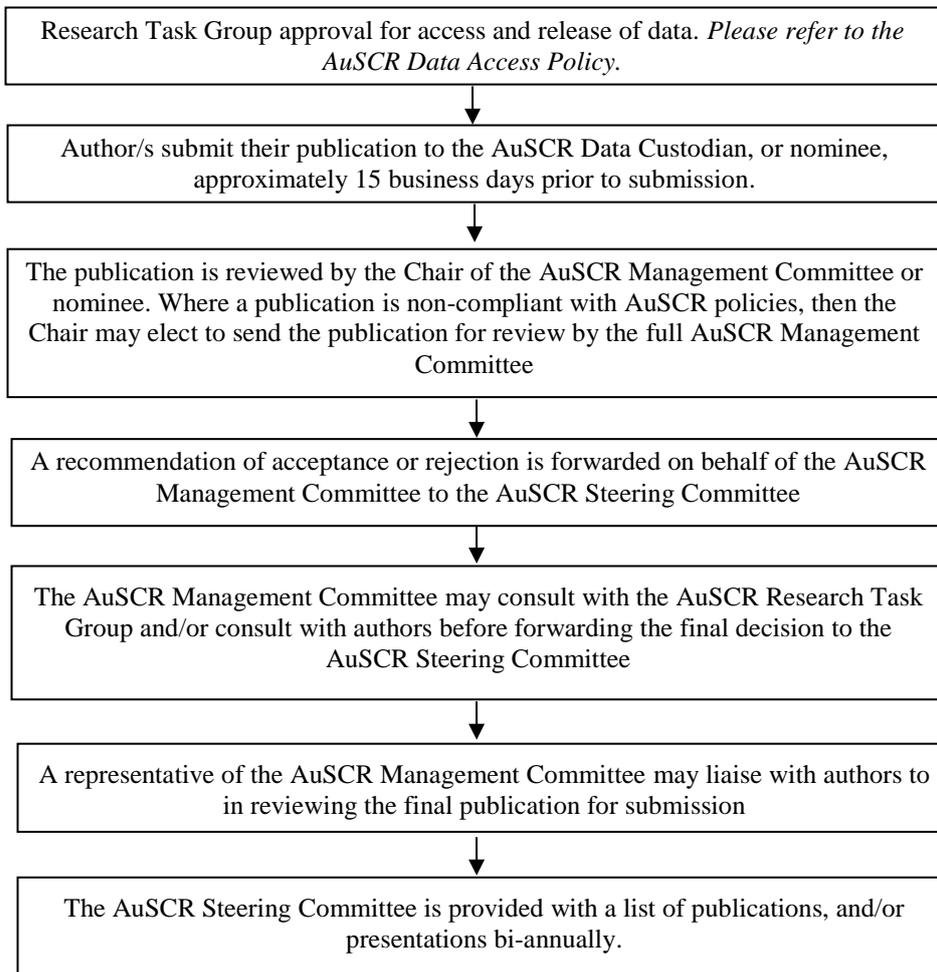
***Egregiously Poor Manuscripts.*** If a review of a proposed manuscript reveals that it is egregiously poor in terms of language, writing or sensible substance, the AuSCR Management Committee or Data Custodian can recommend to the authors that it not be submitted without significant revision. If the authors choose to submit the manuscript anyway, the Management Committee will have three options: 1) request that the group authorship credit be withheld; 2) request that the authors publish a statement to the effect that while AuSCR data were used, the AuSCR Management Committee did not find this manuscript of sufficient merit to warrant submission for publication, and/or; 3) revocation of privileges to use the AuSCR data in the future.

***Failure to Follow User Agreement.*** If users inadvertently violate the User Agreement, it is likely that they will self-correct as infractions are discovered. If users deliberately violate the User Agreement, the sole sanction available to the AuSCR will be to revoke access to the AuSCR data. This may include reporting the violation to the relevant Human Research Ethics Committee.

***Fraudulent Use of Data.*** Open access to hospital sites raises the possibility that individuals could obtain access to data under false pretenses. Should the Management Committee discover an attempt to publish data obtained fraudulently, the data user will be sanctioned through Steering Committee communication with them or their academic supervisor(s). As soon as the Management Committee becomes aware of any breach of the Data Use Agreement, immediate steps will be taken to end the violation. In extreme and/or deliberate cases, this may include discontinuing the user's data access and/or reporting the violation to the relevant Human Research Ethics Committee.

***Journal Objections:*** It is possible that journal editors may object to a group authorship format where authors credited have gathered data but *not* otherwise contributed to data analyses or writing of the manuscript. In these cases contributions to data collection will be acknowledged via another mechanism that is acceptable to the specific journal. The Management Committee can authorise exceptions to the authorship policy or can negotiate with journal editors as needed on a case by case basis.

## Flowchart of the Publication Process



## References

1. <http://www.vcor.org.au/sites/default/files/VCOR%20Publications%20Policy%20v2.0.pdf>
2. <https://www.anzics.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ANZICS-CORE-Data-Access-and-Publication-Policy.pdf>