Use of the Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment (CIWA) score in patients admitted for alcohol withdrawal at Ealing Hospital

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Introduction
- Acute alcohol withdrawal constitutes a medical emergency.
- It is normally treated with a reducing regimen of chlordiazepoxide.
  - Ealing hospital has a proforma to assist in reducing regimen prescription.
- Both NICE and Ealing Hospital guidelines recommend using a standardised scoring system to grade the severity of an alcohol withdrawal.
- The CIWA provides an easily accessible symptom-based scoring system.
- We audited the compliance of clinicians with the CIWA in all patients admitted for alcohol in a staggered 6 month period.

Proportion of patients for which CIWA was documented between August and October 2013

Results

Initial audit
- The CIWA was documented in only 8% of patients (n=26).
- The regimen prescribed was appropriate in 54% of cases based on 1) use of the proforma, 2) guidelines followed, 3) retrospective calculation of the CIWA from patient notes.
- One alcohol withdrawal seizure was documented.

Re-audit
- The CIWA was documented in 73% vs 8% (n=33; p<0.001 Fisher’s exact test).
- Uptake of the new proforma was 67%.
- No adverse effects were documented.

Method
- We included all patients admitted for alcohol withdrawal in the period August to October 2013.
- Data collected:
  - CIWA documented?
  - Regimen appropriate?
  - Any adverse effects from prescribed regimen?
- We developed a new proforma based on the old one, incorporating the CIWA (see figure 1).
- Re-audit proceeded after a period of intensive staff education.
- It included all patients admitted from May to July 2015.
- Additional data collected:
  - Was the new proforma used?

Proportion of patients for which CIWA was documented between May and July 2015

Discussion
- Proforma was useful addition to alcohol withdrawal clerking.
- Improved compliance with safety guidelines.
- Part of a multi-disciplinary overhaul of Ealing Hospital alcohol guidelines.

Figure 1. Copy of old proforma (left) with revised version including CIWA score (right)