Development of an ambulatory care pathway for hyperglycaemia

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At St Helens & Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, we are planning to implement a Hyperglycaemia pathway for our Ambulatory Emergency Care unit with the intention of delivering standardised care to eligible patients with diabetes

Aim

To assess the need for an ambulatory pathway for the management of hyperglycaemia presenting acutely.

Background

The hospitalisation costs for patients with diabetes are considerable. The risk of hospitalisation is almost double than those without the condition. One in seven hospital beds is occupied by someone with diabetes. Around 87% of inpatients with diabetes are admitted as an emergency. The Directory of Ambulatory Emergency Care for Adults (2016) identifies hyperglycaemia as one of the Ambulatory Case Sensitive Conditions. This study explores the need for such a pathway to facilitate an improved service.

Methods

A descriptive mixed method research was conducted at St. Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals Trust to assess nurses’ and doctors’ views about it. A questionnaire survey (quantitative, n=22) and one-to-one semi-structured interviews (qualitative, n=5) were used for data collection. A thematic analysis of interview transcripts was used to identify and explore the emerging patterns and themes.

Outcomes / Results

The need for an organisational and national Hyperglycaemia pathway was highlighted both at interviews and the questionnaire survey. All participants felt that developing an ambulatory pathway is useful and a high-quality management aid.

Three main themes emerged from the qualitative data - Ambulatory management and Standardisation of care; Inadequate resources and staffing levels; Resistance due to fear of change.

Key points

Hyperglycaemia is an emergency condition that can be managed in ambulatory care.

An ambulatory hyperglycaemia pathway helps identify patients who can be safely treated as day cases.

An ambulatory hyperglycaemia pathway requires the availability of diabetes specialist nurses.

A number of conditions preclude the use of an ambulatory hyperglycaemia pathway

Main Themes | Sub Themes
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1. Ambulatory management and standardization of care | • Quality of care • Reduction in hospital admissions • Early discharge
2. Inadequate resources and staffing levels | • Lack of resources • No out of hours diabetes nurse cover • Inadequate staff training • Inability to offer early follow up following discharge
3. Resistance due to fear of change | • Problem with defining criteria • Emotions

Questionnaire Survey results

1. There is a need for an ambulatory pathway for the management of hyperglycaemia.
2. An ambulatory pathway will help to reduce unnecessary hospital admissions.
3. A pathway will help identify patients who can be safely treated as day cases.
4. A pathway will ensure the availability of diabetes specialist nurses.
5. A number of conditions preclude the use of an ambulatory hyperglycaemia pathway.