

Improving cardiovascular monitoring for older adult patients in the community on anti-psychotic medication

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Background

Many antipsychotic medications are known to prolong the QTc interval, leading to an increased risk of arrhythmias and even sudden cardiac death.

NICE recommend that ideally every patient on antipsychotic medications will receive an annual ECG¹. Despite this, we noted that even vulnerable older adult patients do not receive adequate cardiovascular monitoring, particularly when they have been on the medication for many years.

Our community mental health team have the benefit of access to a portable 12-lead ECG machine to perform tracings on domiciliary visits, but it was barely used as only two staff members knew how to do so. This seemed like an important asset we could use to improve the cardiovascular monitoring of our patients.

Aim

We aim for 75% of our patients on anti-psychotics to have an annual ECG by the start of August 2021

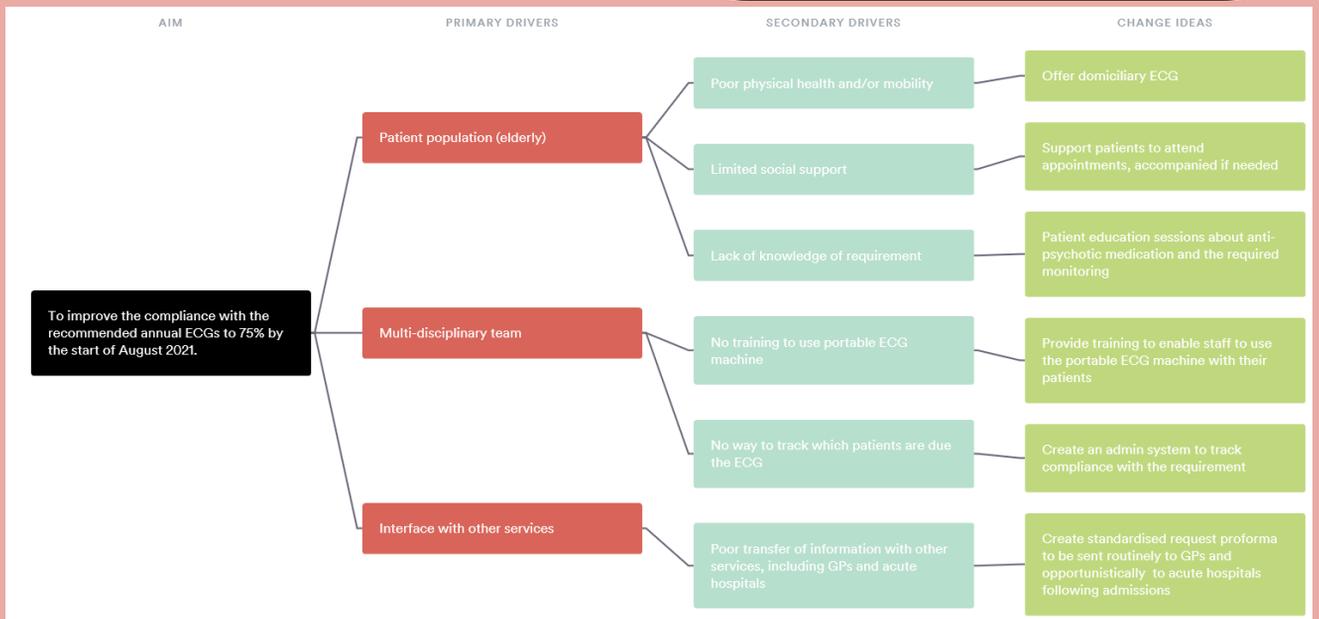
Method

We initially took a sample of care co-ordinated patients in our central London community mental health team on oral or depot anti-psychotic medication. The majority of these had functional psychiatric illnesses, but a small proportion had a diagnosis of dementia. This sample totalled 34 patients.

SystemOne records were reviewed for each patient for evidence of an ECG result within the last 12 months. This meant searching through progress notes, GP tabbed journal and hospital letters. For some patients we did not have access to the GP record and we acknowledge that patients may have had ECGs in GPs and hospitals with the results unavailable to us.

The first two **interventions** were then introduced.

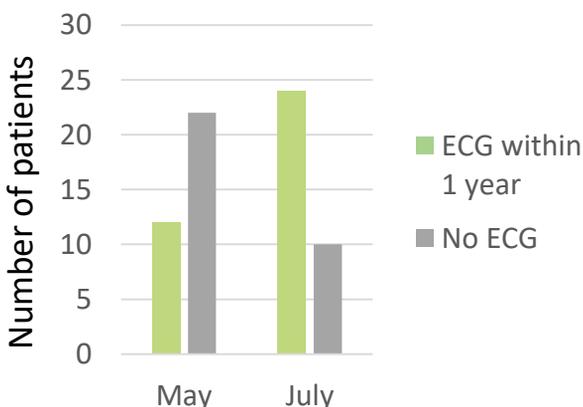
- Developed staff training in the use of the portable ECG machine
- Created and sent a proforma ECG request to GPs for patients able to attend appointments



Results

Of the initial sample prior to any intervention in May 2021, 12 out of 34 patients (35%) had record of an annual ECG and its result.

At the end of August 2021 following the above interventions, 24 out of 34 (70%) of patients had record of an annual ECG and its result.



Discussion and conclusions

With the first PDSA cycle of this project, the amount of patients who had an annual ECG improved from 34% to 71%. This falls slightly short of the aim of 75%, which is likely due to staff training being a larger undertaking than expected (having to first give comprehensive theory and skills practice, prior to transferring this to the patient setting) and less than desired was able to be completed in the given time.

It became even more apparent how important this work is when two of our patients who received an ECG during the project were found to have prolonged QTc intervals, and their management altered because of this (one anti-psychotic reduced, one stopped altogether).

The project remains ongoing with other change ideas to be considered with eventual aim to reach 100% compliance with the ECG requirement.