

Practical application of Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment for Alcohol (CIWA) in real world setting: Retrospective Observational Study

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Background:

- CIWA is a symptom-triggered treatment for acute alcohol withdrawal, which has a comparable efficacy to fixed-dose regimen in clinical trials. (1)

Aim & Hypothesis:

Hypothesis:

- In real-life setting, CIWA is less effective in managing acute alcohol withdrawal than findings from clinical trials.

Aims

- Demonstrate real-world effectiveness of CIWA protocol
- Explore various pitfalls leading to the difference

Methods:

- Retrospective chart review
- All patients prescribed with CIWA protocol & referred to Liaison Psychiatry
- Setting: district general hospital in West Lothian
- Period: April – June 2025 (3 months)
- Outcomes:
 - Duration of CIWA protocol
 - Average frequency of CIWA scoring
 - Average percentage of diazepam administration when CIWA scores exceed clinical threshold
- Adverse events
 - Seizure
 - Wernicke's encephalopathy
 - Delirium tremens
 - STDC issuance, as a proxy for agitation & disturbance

Bibliography:

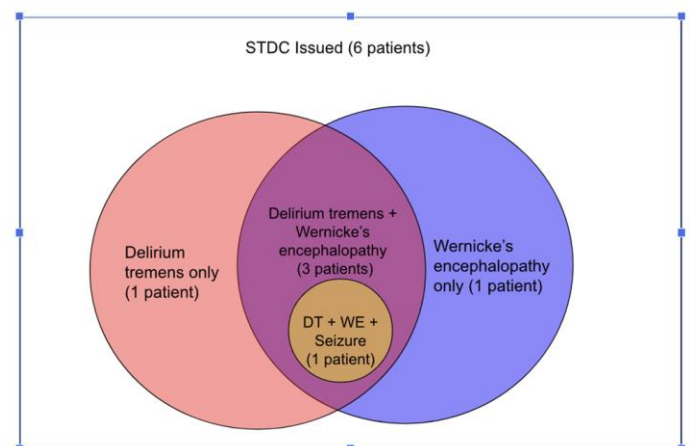
- (1) Al-Maqbali JS, Al Alawi AM, Al-Mamari Q, Al-Huraizi A, Al-Maqrahi N. Symptom-triggered approach versus fixed-scheduled approach of benzodiazepines for management of alcohol withdrawal syndrome: Non-randomized controlled trial. *Alcohol*. 2023 Feb;106:10-14. doi: 10.1016/j.alcohol.2022.09.004. Epub 2022 Oct 11. PMID: 36240945.
- (2) RIE Alcohol Withdrawal SLWG. Alcohol Withdrawal Protocol. Intranet 2025 Jan 18

Results:

- 20 episodes – 19 unique patients
- Median age 55; Male 55% of cohort
- Average CIWA duration: 3.5 days
- Average total doze BZD = 78 mg PO diazepam equivalence

- On average, CIWA scoring was completed every 6.3 hours
- 22% of CIWA scores were above threshold for diazepam administration
- On 24% of these occasions, diazepam **NOT** given despite exceeding CIWA scoring threshold.

Adverse Events:



Discussion:

Proposed barriers:

- Quiet patient being overlooked in a busy setting
- Agitated patients refusing doses
- High inter-rater variability & long list of questions
- Nursing concern over benzodiazepine overdose

Conclusion:

- NHS Lothian is proposing GMAWS (Glasgow Management of Alcohol Withdrawal Scale) in place of CIWA – future audit & effectiveness assessment (2)
- Surveys to explore nursing attitude & barriers to effective alcohol withdrawal management