An Alcohol Withdrawal Care Bundle for Acute Hospitals

Initial findings from our project and key recommendations for care

In partnership with staff working in acute settings at Northwick Park Hospital (NPH), we developed an alcohol care bundle to improve the experience of care & long-term well-being of alcohol dependent patients.

Projects were launched in 2016, a pilot Alcohol Withdrawal Care Bundle on the four wards of the acute admissions unit (AAU). There had been a trial on the wards for three months earlier in the year (April to June). Feedback from ward staff was used to improve the tool within a Plan – Do – Study – Act framework.

Training was provided to nurses on AAU wards in March 2016, and revisited later in the project to allow for staff changes. Induction for medical staff also included basic alcohol awareness, and how to use the care bundle. Trust bulletins and medical education induction sessions also promoted its use.

The care bundle was based on LNWH Trust policy, with project findings to be implemented across all sites when the six month pilot ends. Our forms are available on request.

Audit scope and methods
Case notes are being retrospectively audited for referrals to ACT from AAU wards. We selected patients who started the care bundle on those wards. Exclusions were made if discharged or transferred to another ward outside the AAU within 48 hours of emergency admission, or if alcohol withdrawal management was not required. Although case notes are scanned and electronically archived for AAU, this is not so for other wards, so paper notes will now be audited for cases where no scan was found.

To show the potential scope for an alcohol withdrawal care bundle within the trust (four general hospitals in West London), the following charts give some figures for the identification of alcohol use disorders through clinical coding.

Findings: Referrals for patients with alcohol problems April 2014 to January 2017

Chart 1: Alcohol diagnoses for patients admitted to acute Trust (LNWH). (Y axes below are number of cases. Excludes ED referrals and ward admissions less than 24 hours. LNWH coding is retrospective and so when this poster was produced there were missing cases from December 2016 onwards.)

Project overview
A care bundle is a group of interventions that ward nursing staff and medical colleagues should carry out to ensure that treatment is given in a timely and consistent way.

Some of our intended outcomes are
1. Reduction in the incidence of severe withdrawal in hospital
2. Improved prescribing of Chlordiazepoxide and Thiamine (Phenadox)
3. Use of a validated alcohol withdrawal scale (AWS)
4. More appropriate referral to ACT

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