Effective Clinical Decision Making

The use of the Effective Practitioner website to support the Clinical Decision Making of staff when patients are admitted to the GP assessment area of the Acute Medical Admissions Unit in NHS Fife

BACKGROUND

December 2012 saw the introduction of a GP assessment bay within the Medical Admission Unit (MAU). The MAU is a 44 bedded inpatient facility that receives approximately 45 admissions a day and in addition can review up to 12 GP assessment patients. The driver for change was to introduce a dedicated assessment area that would enhance the patient experience by ensuring a consistent model of care for all patients.

RAPID IMPROVEMENT EVENT

Nursing staff, nurse practitioners and medical staff attended a rapid improvement event to review the current GP assessment pathway from which a process map was developed. The nursing staff were then asked to prepare reflective summaries of their experience of working with GP assessment patients; the range of conditions that patients present with, how patients are triaged and how staff make decisions at different stages of this initial part of the patient’s journey.

Clinical decision making is a balance of experience, awareness, knowledge and information gathering, using appropriate assessment tools, your colleagues and evidence-based practice to guide you.

Clinical decision making is a balance of known best practice (the evidence, the research), awareness of the current situation and environment, and knowledge of the patient. It is about ‘joining the dots’ to make an informed decision. Informed clinical decision making should include a variety of information and knowledge sources.

Supporting and Valuing Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health Professionals in Practice

The Core Skills of Pattern Recognition, Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Evidence-based approaches, Team work, Sharing, Reflection support good, effective clinical decision making requiring a combination of experience and skills.

"Exploring the core skills of Clinical Decision Making were used to create a triage system which invokes the ethos of rapid patient assessment, identifying acutely unwell patients and implementing management plans’’

"The Effective Practitioner website helped me realise how I can be proactive and efficient while using my experience and knowledge of recognising and treating acutely unwell patients.”

"The website highlighted to me that if I wanted to deliver high standards of safe, evidence-based patient care I needed to be an active part of a highly skilled, motivated and hard working medical and nursing team.”

"Working through the Clinical Decision Making section of the Effective Practitioner website helped me to reflect on my practice. Now I always explain the process of what will happen to the patient whilst in the GP assessment bay”

NEXT STEPS

- Training and skills – all staff working within the GP assessment bay will be encouraged and supported to work through the Clinical Decision Making section of the Effective Practitioner website
- Correct mix of staff in this area – we will continue to review the staffing resource for this area
- Team working – Nurse Practitioners, medical staff, nurses – will remain a focus, with staff encouraged to openly discuss their roles and expectations of each other in relation to patient care
- Patient information/communication – we are actively seeking views of our service users
- Prompt decision making – we will review the effectiveness of our triage and assessment in order to ensure that our patients are safe and achieve their planned outcomes
- Correct environment – we are continuing to review where would be the best geographical service location