

Improving Recognition Of And Response To Clinical Deterioration In The Emergency Department Using A Clinical Network.

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Background and objectives: Ensuring that patients who deteriorate receive appropriate and timely care is a key safety and quality challenge. The Emergency Care Clinical Network (Victoria, Australia) works with emergency departments (ED) across the state to improve care by uptake of evidence-based practice and reduction in variation in practice. In 2013, the network offered a 9-month evidence based care improvement project to improve the recognition of and response to clinical deterioration in emergency departments (ED).

Methodology: This was a before and after quality improvement project. Resources for improving management of the deteriorating patient were identified and made available to ED supported by a workshop focused specifically on ED implementation issues. ED participated by an expression of interest process. Local clinicians planned and implemented changes to local practice. A point prevalence method was used for data collection. The outcome of interest was the proportion of patients identified as having clinical instability for whom appropriate action (according to local processes) was taken. Analysis was by comparison of proportions.

Results: 9 ED completed the project. There was 2631 patients in the before cohort and 2823 in the after cohort. In both samples the rate of clinical instability was 11.6%. The proportion of patients who were clinically unstable and had an appropriate response documented increased from 67.6% to 82.6% ($p < 0.0001$).

Conclusion: This project has led to clinically and statistically significant improvements in management of clinical deterioration across a health system.