

Evaluating the incidence and severity of pain within a District General Hospital

Background:

The incidence of pain in the hospital setting continues to be a major challenge faced by health care professionals; it is arguable one of the most common symptoms reported. The exact incidence of pain varies depending on specialities, it is estimated that around 37% to 84% of hospital inpatients experience pain (Gregory and McGowan (2016); 36% of those reporting severe pain, with a further 75% of patients reporting pain following surgery.

Aims and Objectives:

The main objective of this audit was to identify the incidence and severity of pain within a district general hospital.

Methods:

A snap shot audit was performed of documented pain scores over a 24 hour period of all adult medical and surgical inpatient wards. Using trust pain assessment scale based on verbal and numerical rating scales severity is classified as no pain (0), mild pain (1), moderate pain (2) and severe pain (3).

Main Results:

241 adult in-patients pain assessment scores were reviewed across 11 medical and surgical wards. 45% of patients had a score of no pain documented, 12% mild pain, 23% moderate pain, 5% severe pain and 15% did not have a pain score documented. Of the patients who scored severe pain they were found on medical wards. Only one had a referral made to the acute pain team. Out of the 5% with severe pain 3 had on going management from sickle cell team however the remaining 7 could have benefited from review by acute pain team.

Conclusion:

This audit has shown that the incidence of pain within the general population is around 40%, however given that there was 15% of patients did not have a score documented during the 24 hour period the incidence may be higher. With regards to the 5% with severe pain more work is required to promote early referral to acute pain service to improve patient experience and staff awareness of the importance of adequate and timely pain management.