

## **Education Provided by the Acute Pain Team: Time and Effort Down the Drain?**

### **Background**

Formal pain management education and training of nurses caring for patients receiving advanced modes of analgesia such as epidural analgesia and PCA is a crucial role for Acute Pain Teams.<sup>1</sup> With the increasing complexity of analgesic techniques, combined with the equally complex needs of patients requiring acute pain management, such as tertiary colorectal patients at our centre, training has become a large part of the Acute Pain Team workload.

The Royal College of Anaesthetists recommends that 100% of nurses caring for patients with PCA should have received formal training, and 66% of nurses caring for patients receiving epidural analgesia should have received training within the past 3 years.<sup>2</sup>

### **Aim and Objectives**

To establish the proportion of nurses caring for patients receiving PCA and epidural analgesia at a busy district general hospital who have received formal pain management training and to compare this to national standards.

### **Methods**

Lists of nurses working in 10 clinical areas caring for patients receiving either PCA or epidural analgesia were collected and nurses were individually asked when they last received formal training from the Acute Pain Team. These clinical areas consisted of: the Emergency Department (ED), Intensive Care Unit (ITU), Recovery, Colorectal ward, Orthopaedic ward, Vascular ward, Gynaecological ward, Urology ward, Medical High Dependency Unit (MHDU) and the private on-site surgical ward.

Attendance logs were then checked to see how many training sessions had been delivered over the past 3 years and how many nurses had been trained overall during this period.

### **Main results**

A total of 449 nurses work in all 10 clinical areas. 159 (35.4%) of these nurses have received formal PCA training. 6 clinical areas, excluding the ED, MHDU, Orthopaedic ward and Urology ward also accept patients receiving epidural analgesia. Of these wards, 75 out of 266 (28.2%) nurses have received epidural specific training within the past 3 years.

214 nurses have attended PCA training within the past 3 years. 55 (25.7%) of these nurses have left the trust.

117 nurses have attended epidural training delivered by the Acute Pain team within the past 3 years. 42 (35.9%) of these nurses have left the trust.

Table 1 includes a breakdown of nurse training in all 10 clinical areas.

**Table 1**

Clinical Area	Percentage of Nurses with PCA Training	Percentage of Nurses with Epidural Training
Recovery	33.9	30.4
ITU	7.2	9.3
Colorectal ward	31.4	37.1
Vascular ward	65.6	75
Gynaecological ward	40	10
Private surgical ward	50	56.3
ED	57.5	N/A
Orthopaedic ward	15	N/A
MHDU	17.2	N/A
Urology ward	28.6	N/A

### Conclusions

Training levels of nursing staff working in clinical areas which care for patients with either PCA or epidural analgesia is suboptimal. Only epidural training for nurses working on the vascular ward meets the national key performance indicator of 66% of nurses trained within the past 3 years. This is despite high volume training delivered by the Acute Pain Team, as well as popular Link Nurse study days which have provided 36 nurses with advanced training to bolster the knowledge of their ward colleagues. Poor retention of nursing staff at our busy inner city district general hospital is a key factor behind the inadequate numbers of nurses with formal PCA and epidural training.

### References

1. Faculty of Pain Medicine, Royal College of Anaesthetists. *Best practice in the management of epidural analgesia in the hospital setting*. [https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/system/files/FPM-EpAnalg2010\\_1.pdf](https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/system/files/FPM-EpAnalg2010_1.pdf) (accessed 26 July 2018).
2. Royal College of Anaesthetists. *Raising the Standard: a compendium of audit recipes for continuous quality improvement in anaesthesia*. [https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/system/files/CSQ-ARB-2012\\_1.pdf](https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/system/files/CSQ-ARB-2012_1.pdf) (accessed 27 July 2018).