

Aim

Make a recommendation to the RCSI Hospitals' Group of how escalation and subsequent action on early warning scores >3 can be improved and standardised across the group to benefit the deteriorating patient.

Context

The National Early Warning Score Clinical Guideline No. 1¹ states that:

'Effective communication and team work among clinicians is an essential requirement for recognising and responding to clinical deterioration. Poor communication at handover and in other situations has been identified as a contributing factor to incidents where clinical deterioration is not identified or properly managed'.

An audit of Early Warning Score practice across four RCSI Hospitals was carried out by Dr. Kate Redican in 2017². Some of her findings were:

- The use of the ISBAR communication tool is not consistently used throughout the RCSI hospital.
- Documentation of communication with the assigned team is lacking.
- The management plan may have been discussed verbally at ward rounds but not documented.

What are we trying to accomplish?

1. Review relevant literature and the findings of the EWS audit carried out within the RCSI Hospitals' Group 2017.
2. Based on information gained, choose a specific area to focus on in relation to EWS and ascertain current related practice in four RCSI Hospitals
3. Make recommendations to the RCSI Hospitals' Group of how to make improvements in that specific area.

Team

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What We Did

PLAN: Initially our team carried out a literature review to establish what areas of Early Warning Systems to focus on.

We explored a number of options for our quality improvement plan, based on discussions with our sponsor and feedback from the Dragon's Den where it was suggested that we review the RCSI Hospitals EWS audit 2017, we made a decision regarding a specific area requiring improvement to focus on.

- **DO:** We chose a process measure to focus on: Escalation of EWS > 3 and subsequent action.
- We contacted the four hospitals involved in the audit to establish current practice in terms of ISBAR communication, management plan documentation, EWS governance, use of EWS national tool and use of Test your Care metrics. This information helped us to make a recommendation to the RCSI Hospitals' Group as to an implementable quality improvement that could be made in this area.
- **STUDY:** The addition of the management plan sticker in the medical notes following and EWS >3 has been piloted in Connolly hospital by the EWS M&M forum.

- The use of the management plan showed increased benefits, it lead to: increased nursing orders, increased changes in therapy and increased investigations / interventions. (Figure 1).

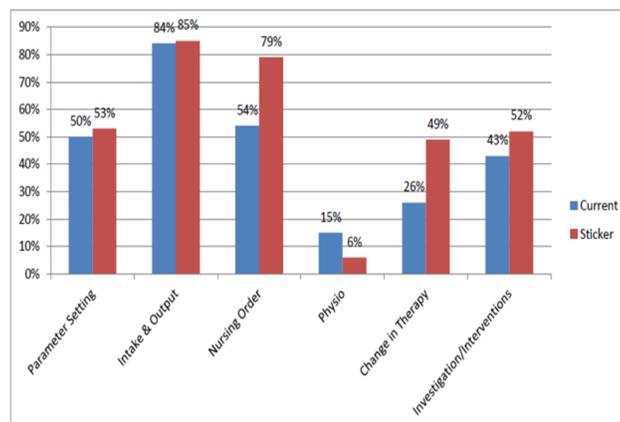


Figure 1: Overall Results of documented evidence of a management plan in response to an EWS ≥3

What We Achieved

1. Literature review and review of the audit report of EWS RCSI hospitals 2017 complete.
2. The specific area of EWS chosen for further focus was Escalation of early warning score > 3 and subsequent action.
3. **ACT:** The recommendation we are making to the RCSI Hospital's Group is that a combined EWS ISBAR communication tool and associated management plan in the form of a sticker or proforma with a section for acknowledgement of the assigned medical team of the triggered EWS be implemented (Figure 2).

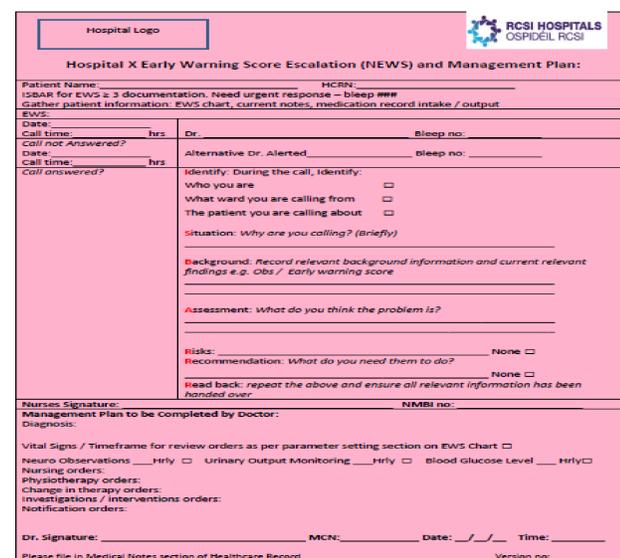


Figure 2: Combined EWS ISBAR communication and management plan sticker

Key Learning

- There is variation in EWS practices within the RCSI Hospitals' Group, including governance of EWS.
- The documentation in the medical notes and the use of the ISBAR are not subject to regular audit in any of the RCSI hospitals. Audits are currently undertaken predominantly by nursing.
- Use of the ISBAR communication tool combined with a related management plan can lead to increased nursing orders, changes in therapy and interventions which can potentially positively influence patient outcome.

References

- 1 National Early Warning Score Clinical Guideline No. 1
- 2 RCSI Hospitals Early Warning Score Review Master Report 2017

Acknowledgements

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