Towards a Safer Emergency Department Resus with Prompt Cards

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Background

Emergency Departments (EDs) are busy and very challenging places for clinicians to work in. In addition to patients often arriving in a critical condition there are many other things that make EDs unique working environments. Doctors have time constraints, they are constantly interrupted, they deal with a huge turnover of patients and on top of all this they need the skills to manage multiple rapidly evolving clinical conditions simultaneously. Over the last couple of years Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals (BSUH) NHS Trust ED introduced checklists for intubation and procedural sedation in ED Resus; in 2013 the intubation and sedation checklists were used on 46% and 88% respectively. This project has now evolved and developed into Prompt Cards. Prompt Cards are a number of written prompts that are vocalised by any member of the ED Resus team during a procedure, team briefing or medical emergency as a fail sure to ensure that the essentials of each have been done. They are similar in concept and design to Flight Emergency Cards found in the aviation industry. The aims of the Prompt Cards are to standardise care, improve patient safety and to empower all staff of all levels and disciplines to use them to ensure optimum care.

Method

After the introduction of Prompt Cards to BSUH ED a survey was sent to all Doctors (ITU, Anaesthetic and ED) and Nurses (ED and Critical Care Outreach) that work in the Emergency Department. The survey was designed to get early opinion on the novel prompt cards and their impact on patient safety.

Results

A total of 44 staff from across ED, ITU and Anaesthetics responded to the survey (29 doctors and 15 nurses). Results are summarised in bold below.

69.4% of staff had either good or excellent first impressions of the new Prompt Cards

69.4% felt the introduction of Prompt Cards would improve patient safety in ED Resus

47.2% of staff told us they would use the Prompt Cards to empower them to challenge bad practice

77.8% of those that responded to the survey said they would continue to use the prompt cards regularly

Conclusions

Prompt Cards have replaced checklists in BSUH ED. Prompt Cards have been well received and are used by doctors and nurses alike. There is early evidence that they are improving Patient Safety. However, there is still ongoing work being done around making their use the cultural norm for doctors. We are working to spread ED Prompt Cards to other Emergency Departments across the UK.

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The most commonly used Prompt Cards are those for Rapid Sequence Induction, Pre-transfer checks, Sedation and Trauma Team Briefings

Prompt Card Examples

"By me showing the prompt card the doctor went through the sedation checks and we identified equipment was missing before we started."

ED Staff Nurse

"The intubation Prompt Card creates a minute to communicate with the team and check everyone is clear on the plan. It helps me signify we about to begin and I find that helpful."

Anaesthetic SHO