

Nurse initiated thrombolysis in rural NSW

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Evidence suggests that time is of the essence in ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI). The sooner the patient's myocardium is reperfused through strategies such as thrombolysis or primary angioplasty, the better the outcome for the patient with reduced mortality, reduced myocardial damage, and fewer complications. As primary angioplasty is only available in a few major metropolitan centres thrombolysis is the most common reperfusion strategy used in the majority of Australian emergency departments.

ST-elevation myocardial infarction is a medical emergency, but symptoms are often not recognised by patients or they drive themselves to an emergency department resulting in delayed access to services. In Australia 32% of the population lives outside major metropolitan centres and may present following a STEMI to a rural hospital with no medical officer on-site resulting in a delay in thrombolysis treatment time.

Hunter New England Health, which covers a large rural population with 31 rural hospitals/multi purpose centres, has developed nurse initiated thrombolysis to address this problem and potentially reduce door-to-needle times and improve patient outcomes. Nurse initiated thrombolysis is based on a successful Hunter New England Health pilot of pre-hospital thrombolysis where patients with STEMI who have called an ambulance are given thrombolysis by ambulance personnel.

Nurse initiated thrombolysis involves registered nurses in three rural hospitals, following a targeted education and assessment process, following an agreed protocol supported by an area standing order administering thrombolysis to patients who present to the emergency department with a STEMI without a medical officer being present. This project ensures that patients receive timely reperfusion therapy minimising any potential delays.

This presentation will provide an overview of the implementation, education, assessment and initial evaluation of the pilot nurse initiated thrombolysis project.

Key Words

Thrombolysis, Nurse Initiated, ST-Elevated myocardial infarction, STEMI