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Ms Cheryl Kimber

Nurse Practitioner,
Orthopaedics,
Flinders Medical Centre, SA

Implementation Project:

Preventing osteoporosis-related fractures from happening again

Studies have found that a majority of patients with osteoporosis-related fractures do not receive the evaluation and/or treatment for osteoporosis called for by clinical guidelines. Ms Kimber's project aims to improve the identification and management of osteoporosis in patients with low trauma wrist fractures at Flinders Medical Centre in Adelaide, South Australia.

Through a targeted strategy including discussion forums, audit and feedback and reminders, Ms Kimber is encouraging medical and nursing staff's participation and uptake of osteoporosis guidelines. With clear evidence showing that a single low trauma fracture indicates a sufficient risk of future fracture, improved management of patients with osteoporosis-related fractures will lower the risk of further fractures occurring.

Implementation Project Progress Report, October 2007:

An Osteoporosis Management Protocol has been introduced into the orthopaedic outpatient trauma clinic (August 2006). The orthopaedic clinic nurses triage all female trauma patients over 45 years and male trauma patients over 55 years male with possible fragility fracture. These patients are given a short questionnaire that assists the clinic staff and orthopaedic doctors to ascertain whether the patient meets the criteria to be commenced on the Protocol.

A retrospective clinical audit is currently being undertaken for a six month period to follow up patients with identified fragility fractures. The audit involves a patient phone interview. The interview establishes whether the Osteoporosis Management Protocol was implemented in the clinic, and if a health professional at the clinic identified the possibility of osteoporosis and discussed this with the patient. The audit is also collecting data on whether osteoporosis education was given and whether the patient was referred to their general practitioner or the Metabolic Bone Clinic. Importantly the consumer's feedback on the whole process is being obtained. This includes what recommended action the patient did or did not undertake and why.

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The gap between best evidence and actual clinical practice with fragility fracture management and osteoporosis is steadily and consistently being filled. Sustainability of the project is now the key objective. The continued issue of rotating medical staff means that ongoing education and reminders by a core group of health professionals is required for this practice change to be sustainable.

The orthopaedic clinic nurses are a stable work force and as such are champions of change, its implementation and sustainability. Future investigation and development of the nurses' roles will assist in fostering a primary health care and prevention model essential in changing future health care outcomes, in particular hospital admissions.

Funding Partner:

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The South Australia Department of Health provides leadership in health reform, policy development and planning, and is committed to protecting and improving the health of all South Australians, with a focus on well-being, illness prevention, early intervention and quality care.

Project Mentor:

Ms Margaret Martin
Deputy Director, Surgical and Specialty Services, Flinders Medical Centre, SA

NICS Mentor:

Professor Karen Grimmer-Somers
Director, Centre for Allied Health Evidence, Professor of Allied Health, School of Health Sciences, University of South Australia, SA

Key Presentations:

Kimber C. Bridging the gap – the orthopaedic way [presentation]. ANZONA conference, Rotorua New Zealand; 2007
Kimber C. Bridging the gap - the orthopaedic way. 5th Australasian Conference on Safety and Quality in Health Care; 2007.
Kimber C. Putting evidence into practice is easy so what's the problem? The South Australia Department of Health Nursing & Midwifery Office: The 1st Nursing & Midwifery Symposium. Adelaide; 2007.
Kimber C. Changing clinical practice for patients with fractured neck of femurs: A clinical practice improvement project [presentation]. National Institute of Clinical Studies Symposium - Using Evidence: Using Guidelines. Melbourne; 2006.
Kimber C. Changing clinical practice for patients with fractured neck of femurs: A clinical practice improvement project [poster]. National Institute of Clinical Studies Symposium - Using Evidence: Using Guidelines. Melbourne; 2006.
Kimber C. Preventing Osteoporosis Related Fractures from Happening Again in Low Trauma Wrist Fractures [presentation]. South Australian Orthopaedic Nurses: Osteoporosis - Truths, Trends and Treatments. Adelaide; 2006.

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