Allergy Awareness Week: The use of teamwork, ward based activities and social media as a novel education strategy in a District General Hospital

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Background: Local audit and clinical incidents identified areas for improvement in prescribing and administration of medication in patients with allergies. A pilot project using improvement methodology in the medical receiving unit demonstrated significantly improved documentation and prescribing in this patient group. The improvement work was spread to the whole hospital in the format of ‘Allergy awareness week’ using behavioural change techniques to encourage staff engagement.

Aims/Objectives: Improve knowledge and awareness of allergy safety in multidisciplinary staff in a district general hospital using novel practical ward based activities and participation via social media.

Method: Support was obtained from Medical, Nursing and Pharmacy management. Ward activities included daily safety briefs (delivered by different staff groups), a novel practical Antibiotic Category Quiz and data collection on current practice. Daily themes included documentation, administration checks, high risk moments and patient empowerment. Wards participating fully were entered in a prize draw.

Participation and engagement of staff on Twitter was actively encouraged and wards competed for a ‘Twitter Champion Cup’ using #MKAllergyAwareness17.

Results: Median number of staff participating in the safety briefs was 9 per clinical area (range 4-12). 82 people completed the antibiotic category quiz and 111 staff completed the allergy awareness week quiz. 99% (329/333) patients audited had the correct allergy wrist band per local policy. Clinical incident reports related to allergy reduced in the period after the awareness week.

- Pre – intervention (Jan to April ‘17), 14 patients with a documented penicillin allergy were prescribed penicillin and 12 patients received a dose (no patients had a reaction).
- After the awareness week (May – July ‘17), no patients identified with a penicillin allergy were prescribed or administered penicillin.

Further work: This model was replicated locally with similar success, demonstrating the model is effective as a wider education strategy.

Conclusion: These results demonstrate high levels of staff engagement, and a positive impact on clinical practice, education and most importantly improved patient engagement and increased safety. Local participation by staff engendered ownership, learning and improvement of clinical practice and patient care/safety.

References: