

Vital Sign Monitoring in the Emergency Department: A Quality Improvement Project

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On my honor I pledge that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment. BL

Abstract

The majority of deteriorating patients who suffer adverse events with high risk of death have antecedent abnormal vital signs in the hours before these events. This Quality Improvement project aimed to determine if a web-based educational module that provided knowledge translation of unit policies and vital sign monitoring techniques could improve the frequency, consistency, and completeness of vital signs collected and documented by ED nursing staff. To assess the outcome of this intervention on nurse driven vital sign assessments, a retrospective pre-post-intervention study design was completed at a single-site emergency department. The results did not show a significant improvement of overall vital sign documentation following implementation, though a high level of consistency in nursing documentation, both pre- and post-intervention, with regard to the collection of vital signs was observed. The expectation is that this knowledge can function as a source for cognitive behavioral change to improve compliance in vital sign documentation, and nurses can be more mindful and more informed about the usefulness of vital sign measurements. With greater understanding of best practices for vital sign collection and interpretation coupled with increased knowledge of unit policy and procedures, nurses can more readily capture a well-defined clinical picture. If these strategies for vital sign assessment and reassessment can be implemented, there will be improved patient outcomes.