



Snapshot Clinical Audit

Audit Title: Appropriate and Effective use of Activated Charcoal

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Work Stream: Medicines Management

Aim & Objectives: To ascertain if activated charcoal is being prescribed to patients appropriately (for oral overdoses) and within time scales that will achieve a clinically effective outcome.

For best clinical outcomes activated charcoal should be administered within 1 hour from time of ingested oral overdose. However, NICE guidelines recommend its use within 2 hours of ingestion.

Methodology and Sampling: A census of activated charcoal usage was identified using ACESO Medicines Management) covering a period between 2015 and 2017. This generated a sample of 9268.

A sample of 300 was selected to conduct this analysis. Following a number of exclusion (i.e. no corresponding incident number, activated charcoal not administered, patient refused) this left a sample of 238.

Findings:

| Recording | N=238 | % |
|--|---------|-----|
| Time of overdose not recorded | 20 (n) | 8% |
| No time charcoal was administered | 14 (n) | 6% |
| Onset of symptoms and time administered recorded | 204 (n) | 86% |
| Administration | N=204 | % |
| Activated charcoal was administered within 1 hour of overdose | 104 | 51% |
| Activated charcoal was administered within 1-2 hours of overdose | 76 | 37% |
| Activated charcoal was administered over 2 hours from overdose | 24 | 12% |
| At Hospital | N=204 | % |
| At Hospital Time was over 1 hour of the overdose | 187 | 92% |

Summary Statement:

Based on the sample analysed, activated charcoal is being administered appropriately and mainly given within timescales advocated within local and national guidelines. There are some instances where activated charcoal is being given outside of the recommended timeframes.

Recommendations:

- Continue usage of activated charcoal.
- Crews to ensure times for overdose are accurately recorded on the PCR whenever possible.
- Crews to ensure time of administration of activated charcoal is recorded.
- Communications to be shared to make clear the appropriate timeframes that activated charcoal should be used within.