

Physicians' Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Managing Alcohol Withdrawal: a Survey

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Introduction

Alcohol dependence is seen in approximately 15-20% of hospitalized patients. Delirium tremens is a serious manifestation of alcohol withdrawal. Understanding physicians' knowledge, attitudes and practices is vital to facilitate early recognition and timely management.

Aims

Assess knowledge, attitudes and practices of managing alcohol withdrawal in physicians in Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Singapore.

Methodology

An anonymous self-administered survey assessing demographics, training experience, department of service, knowledge and attitudes was distributed between July to September 2014 to all registered medical practitioners in fifteen departments within the general hospital.

Results

Six hundred and forty surveys were distributed and 259 responses received with a response rate of 40.5%. Medical disciplines comprised of 55.1% of the responses and surgical 20.9%. Among the physicians surveyed, 61% were male, 39.8% were less than 30 years old, most were junior doctors/trainees (56%) and 71% saw 0-1 case of alcohol withdrawal/delirium tremens per month.

Overall, physicians felt they had been exposed to management of alcohol withdrawal, there was value in learning how to manage (71%) and learning how to manage should be part of core training (73.4%). Only 40.5% felt they were competent in managing and most felt it was not difficult to learn (43.7%). A majority (58.6%) felt they would be more comfortable if there was a protocol available and 36.6% hoped for more education in this area.

Conclusion

There are positive attitudes towards learning how to manage alcohol withdrawal and a protocol driven approach coupled with education as part of core training will be of value.