Developing a standard guidance for IV medications at ward level

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INTRODUCTION

Safe and effective administration of IV medications is key to patient safety. Lack of timely access to knowledge at the point of care is one of the problems affecting safety and quality in medication administration and monitoring. It is essential that healthcare professionals have access to concise and easy to use information to ascertain safe and appropriate use of products. There is a need within an organization for a guidance to standardise use of IV medications. In the main acute hospital in Malta—Mater Dei Hospital, preparation of IV medications is carried at ward level and no special unit or guidelines are present to aid in this practice.

AIMS

To introduce a standard guidance to reduce preventable medication administration errors and evaluate the developed monographs

METHOD

The study was conducted in 3 phases:

1. Medication selection: the commonly used medications in the wards were selected by accessing pharmacy databases, conducting a survey and interviewing nurses in charge.

2. Monographs development: Published literature, evidence based practice, Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC) and manufacturers of the medications were consulted to develop the monographs. The monographs were divided in six sections (Figure 1).

3. Monographs evaluation: A questionnaire entitled “Assessment of administration practice” was developed, validated and distributed to nurses after presenting the monographs. Questions were set to assess knowledge of IV medications, identify sources of information required for safe and effective administration, type of difficulties encountered and potential factors that lead to medication errors.

RESULTS

1. Twenty active pharmaceutical ingredients were selected where a monograph was developed for all strengths and different brands for a medication.

2. Fifty-five paediatric nurses out of 62 participated in the study. Thirty-two nurses reported that drug monographs are their choice of sources for information.

3. Twenty-seven nurses reported that reconstitution and dilution practice and choice of compatible fluids were main difficulties encountered in administration practice (Figure 2).

4. Insufficient knowledge, inconsistencies between references and lack of standard guide for preparation and administration of injectable medications were all contributing factors to medication errors (Figure 3).

CONCLUSION

Availability of a standard guide for the use of injectable medications would assist in addressing gaps in knowledge of medication administration and lead to standardisation of practice which would overall contribute to safer administration practice.

REFERENCES

