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Conference Abstract

Management of suspected and confirmed spinal fractures at a large regional hospital

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AUTHORS


Julia Culvenor[1] Physiotherapist *


Scott Robbins[1] Physiotherapist

CORRESPONDENCE

* Julia Culvenor jculvenor@bendigohealth.org.au

AFFILIATIONS

[1] Bendigo Health, Bendigo, Vic. 3550, Australia

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Introduction: This arm of a wider spinal management project analysed retrospective data to determine the effectiveness and timeliness of care provided to patients with suspected/confirmed spinal fractures at our health service. A survey of medical and physiotherapy staff confidence in managing these patients was also undertaken.

Methods: A data analysis of the 21/22 FY data was undertaken to determine:
• Length of stay;
• Injury surveillance data;
• Time taken to contact tertiary service (neurosurgical or spinal);
• Accuracy and completeness of spinal management advice; and
• Timeliness of external orthotist input.

A survey of medical and physiotherapy staff was also undertaken to determine confidence and knowledge managing this patient cohort.

Results/Outcomes: The data highlights the challenges of managing suspected/confirmed spinal fractures within a regional health service. The main barriers identified include:
• Delay in contacting tertiary service (spinal/neurosurgical);
• Consistent documentation of spinal management plan;
• No 'streamed' care for spinal fractures; and
• Medical and physiotherapy staff identified they have decreased confidence managing this patient cohort.

Discussion/Learnings: Anecdotal challenges to safe and effective spinal fracture patient care have been confirmed through this data analysis. The primary learning is the need for a succinct yet comprehensive spinal management plan.

Conclusion/Recommendation: A formal documentation pathway and update of the Spinal Management Policy will be implemented in 2024. Post-implementation data collection will then occur to determine effectiveness for patient and staff domains.