Impacts on Service Delivery of a Model Pathway for COPD

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Background
COPD causes 115,000 emergency admissions and 24,000 deaths per year in England.1 Cochrane systematic review has identified that pulmonary rehabilitation reduces readmission and mortality rates following exacerbation, but only 50% of trusts have full provision for eligible patients.2 It is estimated that 2 million people have undiagnosed and untreated COPD3 and that 20% of these people have severe or very severe disease.4 10% of emergency admissions for acute exacerbations of COPD are in people who have not been previously diagnosed.5 The NHS Respiratory Atlas of Variation6 shows substantial variation across England in the quality of chronic disease management provided in primary care. NICE standards define key interventions that improve outcomes in COPD including6:

- Stratification of patients by disease severity
- Stratification of prescribing – including correct use of inhalers
- Supported self-management

Key to these interventions is the need to manage patients proactively in order to reduce the number of patients who die prematurely through a focus on identification, diagnosis, intervention and proactive care.6

An integrated care approach offers the opportunity to address these issues by supporting a structured patient journey, managing patients appropriately according to disease severity in order to proactively reduce exacerbations and unplanned admissions. In addition, a model care pathway for COPD provides a framework for service delivery that will allow care to be delivered in a timely and equitably manner.

Objectives

- Identify areas of the model pathway that can be used to improve service delivery in COPD
- Improve communication
- Reduce patients requiring unplanned admissions

Methodology
Following discussion and needs analysis, a group of clinical professionals engaged in the treatment of people with COPD developed a model pathway for COPD comprising a set of forms for use at appropriate points in the patient journey (Fig. 1). Each form provides a stand-alone guide to patient assessment and care and is supported by a comprehensive evidence base summary, aligned with NICE guidance and current best practice. The model pathway was developed according to current best practice as defined by the European Pathways Association7 and in alignment with the NHS ICPAT8 tool in order to ensure clinical quality from a governance perspective.

Discussion regarding the utility of the pathway with clinicians in two separate localities identified specific opportunities to pilot sections of the pathway in the clinical setting:

- Streamlining early management of exacerbations in order to reduce the need for admissions
- Providing Practice Nurses with a clear reference framework for the management of exacerbations

Implementation

The COPD model pathway has been adopted in two pilot localities, East Surrey CCG and Colney Medical Centre.

In East Surrey CCG, the forms for management of exacerbations are available within the EMIS system and accessible to all clinical professionals. Led by the Respiratory Nurse Specialist, the forms are being used to target patients with exacerbations in order to ensure that an appropriate treatment plan is made and implemented with the objective of reducing unplanned admissions8.

In St Albans, one practice (Colney Medical Centre) has used selected forms to structure consultations between patients with mild or moderate COPD and practice nurses.

Feedback indicates that the forms are well laid out and easy to follow, provide useful prompts that improve the questioning of patients, help ensure appropriate recording of DOF data and are recommended to other health care professionals as an easy-to-follow tool that is aligned to the evidence base for COPD.

Key Learnings

- The model pathway forms may be adapted to fit the needs of any locality
- Adoption of the forms into practice IT systems is straightforward
- Use of the forms brings clarity to the process of patient contact and informs the tasks required
- A structured record of patient contact and action provides a robust communication platform between multiple clinicians involved in patient care

References

5. COPD Pilot Assessment Report August 2015-10-15
6. RightCare Pathway Advisory Group. Definition of a Care Pathway. 2015
7. European Care Pathways Association. Definition of a Care Pathway. 2015
8. ICAPAT (Integrated Care Pathway Assessment Tool) International Journal of Care Pathways November 2009 13: 75-77
10. Data on File. COPD Pilot Assessment Report August 2015-10-15

Figure 1 COPD Model Pathway process Map:

Figure 2. Acute Management of Exacerbations Patient Form:

Figure 3. Post exacerbation Review Patient Form:

The COPD model pathway has been developed and funded by AstraZeneca with a multidisciplinary steering committee...