

Local Anaesthetic Toxicity Awareness in Southern General Hospital Labour Suite

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Introduction

Local Anaesthetic (LA) toxicity can cause rare but life threatening complications. There is wide use of LA in obstetric units. The purpose of this study was to assess the knowledge of staff working in labour ward in order to highlight areas requiring development to improve patient safety. Topics covered included knowledge of LA, recognition of LA toxicity and the initial and definitive management of LA toxicity.

Methods

A questionnaire was utilised to perform anonymous prospective data collection. 45 members of staff were surveyed including midwives, obstetricians, ODPs and anaesthetic staff. Staff were allowed unlimited time to complete the questionnaire but were observed to prevent conferring with colleagues or referring to literature.

Results

Positive points:-

- Midwives and obstetricians performed well in the initial management of LA toxicity.
- ODPs were familiar with the initial management of LA toxicity and furthermore knew intralipid was the antidote for LA toxicity and its location in labour ward.
- Anaesthetists showed a good knowledge of LA drug concentrations and toxic doses.

Negative points:-

- Knowledge of LA concentration and toxic doses of LA was limited among midwives and obstetricians.
- Most Midwives and obstetricians also did not recognise that intralipid is the antidote and its location on labour ward.
- Recognition of the signs of LA toxicity was poor in all groups with obstetricians performing worst, not recognising any symptoms.

Conclusion

There was varying awareness of LA toxicity and it was highlighted that all staff groups could improve their knowledge base in certain areas.

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