Measuring the Units
An audit of alcohol documentation in patients

**AIM**

NCEPOD (National Confidential Enquiry into Patient Outcome and Death) published “Measuring the Units” in June 2013:

- All patients presenting to hospital services should be screened for alcohol misuse. An alcohol history indicating the number of units drunk weekly, drinking patterns, recent drinking behaviour, time of last drink, indicators of dependence and risk of withdrawal should be documented.
- Within Southport and Ormskirk Hospitals NHS Trust all patients should have an Audit C completed asking them about alcohol consumption.
- All patients presenting to acute services with a history of potentially harmful drinking should be referred to alcohol support services for a comprehensive physical and mental assessment. The referral and outcomes should be documented in the notes.

**OUTCOME/RESULTS**

Has the patient been asked the Audit C questions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Re-Audit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patients scoring over 7 and referral to alcohol liaison specialist</td>
<td>44 (70%)</td>
<td>86 (82%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of patients scoring over 7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number referred to alcohol liaison specialist</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number not referred to alcohol liaison specialist</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number refusing referral to alcohol liaison specialist</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (18%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**AUDIT METHODOLOGY**

Looking at the use of the Audit C screening tool and Severity of Alcohol Dependency Questionnaire

**AUDIT C**

Questions | Scoring system
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How often do you have a drink containing alcohol? | Never | 0
Occasional times per month | Monthly | 1-2
Weekly | Weekly | 3-4
Less than 1 time per week | Less than once a month | 5-6
1 time per week | Once a month | 7-9
More than 1 time per week | More than once a month | 10+
Alcohol does your have on a typical day when you are drinking? | Never | 0
Occasional | Occasional | 1-2
Weekly | Weekly | 3-4
Less than 1 time per week | Less than once a month | 5-6
1 time per week | Once a month | 7-9
More than 1 time per week | More than once a month | 10+

**CONCLUSION**

Improvement in asking the Audit C questions

- 30% increase in CAS cards
- 7% increase in Inpatient notes
- Improved use of the Audit C questions to identify patients with problematic drinking requiring referral to alcohol liaison specialist
- Increase in the number of patients scoring above 7 who are referred to alcohol liaison specialist

**HOW WE MADE THE IMPROVEMENTS**

- HALT (Hospital Alcohol Liaison Team) – 5 nurses who are passionate about highlighting the importance of alcohol consumption and subsequent problems.
- Ward level and A&E level training by HALT team to build relationships.
- HALT team approachable and very visible on the wards so nobody forgets!!
- Developed alcohol champions role on each ward.
- Posters on the ward to increase awareness for both staff and patients. Showed every area how to use the audit c, and answered any questions.
- Explained what a unit of alcohol is.
- Made it fun by asking staff to complete audit C for themselves, to make it real.
- Alcohol is an issue that everyone has experience with either professionally or personally.